A JAPANESE NIGHTINGALE

BY ONOTO WATANNA

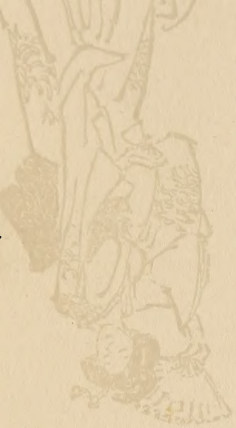
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THE STORM DANCE

A JAPANESE NIGHTINGALE

by

ONOTO WATANNA

ILLUSTRATED BY

GENJIRO YETO



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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	THE STORM DANCE	1
II.	IN WHICH WOMAN PROPOSES AND MAN DISPOSES	16
III.	AN APPOINTMENT	34
IV.	IN WHICH MAN PROPOSES	46
V.	IN WHICH THE EAST AND THE WEST ARE UNITED	57
VI.	THE ADVENTURESS	66
VII.	MY WIFE!	81
VIII.	YUKI'S HOME	94
IX.	THE MIKADO'S BIRTHDAY	107
X.	A BAD OMEN	121
XI.	THE NIGHTINGALE	131
XII.	TARO BURTON	137
XIII.	IN WHICH TWO MEN LEARN OF A SISTER'S SACRIFICE	148
XIV.	A STRUGGLE IN THE NIGHT	165
XV.	THE VOW	177
XVI.	A PILGRIM OF LOVE	188
XVII.	YUKI'S WANDERINGS	203
XVIII.	THE SEASON OF THE CHERRY BLOSSOM	215

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE STORM DANCE . . . . . *Frontispiece*

THE NIGHTINGALE SONG . . *Facing p.* 134

"THE THOUSAND PETALS OF CHERRY BLOSSOMS WERE FALLING ABOUT THEM" . " 224

A JAPANESE NIGHTINGALE

I

THE STORM DANCE

THE last rays of sunset were tingeing the land, lingering in splendor above the bay. The waters had caught the golden glow, and, miser-like, seemingly made effort to keep it with them; but, inexorably, the lowering sun drew away its gilding light, leaving the waters a dark green. The shadows began to darken, faint stars peeped out of the heavens, and slowly, unwillingly, the day's last ray followed the sunken sun to rest; and with its vanishment a pale moon stole overhead and threw a seraphic light over all things.

Out in the bay that the sun had left was a tiny island, and on this a Japanese business man, who must also have been an artist, had built a tea-house and laid out a garden. Such an island! In the sorcerous moonlight, one might easily believe it the witch-work of an Oriental Merlin. Running in every direction were narrow jinrikisha roads, which crossed bewildering little creeks, spanned by entrancing bridges. These were round and high, and curved in the centre, and clinging vines and creeping, nameless flowers crawled up the sides and twined about the tiny steps which ascended to the bridges. After crossing a bridge shaped thus, a straight bridge is forever an outrage to the eye and sense. And all along the beach of this island was pure white sand, which looked weirdly whiter where the moonbeams loitered and played hide-and-seek under the tree-shadows.

The seekers of pleasure who made

their way out to the little island on this night moored their boats here in the shadows beneath the trees, and drove in fairy vehicles, pulled by picturesque runners, clear around the island, under the pine-trees, over miniature brooks, into the mysterious dark of a forest. Suddenly they were in a blaze of swinging, dazzling lights, laughter and music, chatter, the clattering of dishes, the twang of the samisen, the ron-ton-ton of the biwa. They had reached the garden and the tea-house.

Some pleasure-loving Japanese were giving a banquet in honor of the full moon, and the moon, just over their heads, clothed in glorious raiment, and sitting on a sky-throne of luminous silver, was attending the banquet in person, surrounded by myriad twinkling stars, who played at being her courtiers. Each of the guests had his own little mat, table, and waitress. They sat in a semicircle, and

drank the sake hot, in tiny cups that went thirty or more to the pint; or the Kyoto beer that had been ordered for the foreigners who were the chief guests this evening. This is the toast the Japanese made to the moon: "May she with us drink a cup of immortality!" and then each wished the one nearest him ten thousand years of joy.

Now the moon-path widened on the bay, and the moon itself expanded and grew more luminous as though in proud sympathy and understanding of the thousand banquets held in her honor this night. All the music and noise and clatter and revel had gradually ceased, and for a time an eloquent silence was everywhere. Huge glowing fire-flies, flitting back and forth like tiny twinkling stars, seemed to be the only things stirring.

Some one snuffed the candles in the lanterns, and threw a large mat in the centre of the garden, and dusted it ex-

travagantly with rice flour. Then a shaft of light, that might have been the combination of a thousand moonbeams, was flashed on the mat from an opening in the upper part of the house, and out of the shadows sprang on to the mat a wild, vivid little figure, clad in scintillating robes that reflected every ray of light thrown on them; and, with her coming, the air was filled with the weird, wholly fascinating music of the koto and samisen.

She pirouetted around on the tips of the toes of one little foot, clapped her hands, and courtesied to the four corners of the earth. Her dance was one of the body rather than of the feet, as back and forth she swerved. There was a patter, patter, patter. Her garments seemed endowed with life, and took on a sorrowing appearance; the lights changed to accompany her; the music sobbed and quivered. It had begun to rain! *She* was raining! It seemed almost as if the pitter-patter of

her feet were the falling of tiny raindrops; the sadness of her garments had increased, and now they seemed to be weeping, at first gradually, then faster and still faster, until finally she was a storm—a dark, blowing, lightning storm. From above the light shot down in quick, sharp flashes, the drums clashed madly, the koto wept on, and the samisen shrieked vindictively.

Suddenly the storm quieted down and ceased. A blue light flung itself against the now lightly swaying figure; then the seven colors of the spectrum flashed on her at once. She spread her garments wide; they fluttered about her in a large half-circle, and, underneath the rainbow of the gown, a girl's face, of exquisite beauty, smiled and drooped. Then the extinction of light—and she was gone.

A common cry of admiration and wonder broke out from Japanese and foreigners alike. They called for her, clapped, stamped, whistled, cheered.

One man's voice rose above the clatter of noises that had broken loose all over the gardens. He was demanding excitedly of the proprietor to tell him who she was.

The proprietor, smirking and bowing and cringing, nevertheless would not tell.

The American theatrical manager lost his head a moment. He could make that girl's fortune in America! He understood it was possible to purchase a geisha for a certain term of years. He stood ready on the spot to do this. He was ready to offer a good price for her. Who was she, and where did she live?

Meanwhile the nerve-scraping dzin, dzin, dzin of a samisen was disturbing the air with teasing persistence. There is something provoking and still alluring in the music of the samisen. It startles the chills in the blood like the maddening scraping of a piece of metal against stone, and still there

is an indescribable fascination and beauty about it. Now as it scratched and squealed intermittently and gradually twittered down to a zoom, zoom, zoom, a voice rose softly, and gently, insinuatingly, it entered into the music of the samisen. Only one long note had broken loose, which neither trembled nor wavered. When it had ended none could say, only that it had passed into other notes as strangely beautiful, and a girl was singing.

Again the light flashed down and showed her standing on the same mat on which she had danced, her hands clasped, her face raised. She was ethereal, divinely so. Her kimono was all white, save where the shaft of moonbeams touched the silk to silvery brilliance. And her voice! All the notes were minors, piercing, sweet, melancholy — terribly beautiful. She was singing music unheard in any land save the Orient, and now for the first time, perhaps, appreciated by the for-

eigners, because of that voice—a voice meant for just such a medley of melody. And when she had ceased, the last note had not died out, did not fall, but remained raised, unfinished, giving to the Occidental ears a sense of incompleteness. Her audience leaned forward, peering into the darkness, waiting for the end.

The American theatrical manager stalked towards the light, which lingered a moment, and died out, as if by magic, as he reached it. But the girl was gone.

"By Jove! She's great!" he cried out, enthusiastically. Then he turned on the proprietor. "Where is she? Where can I find her?"

The man shook his head.

"Oh, come, now," the American demanded, impatiently, "I'll pay you."

"I don' know. She is gone."

"But you know where she lives?"

The proprietor again answered in the negative.

"Now, wouldn't that make one of this country's squatty little gods groan?" the exasperated manager demanded of a younger man who had followed him forward.

"She'd be a great card in vaudeville," the young man contented himself with saying.

"There's a fortune in her! I'm going to find her if she's on this island. Come on with me, will you?"

Nothing loath, Jack Bigelow fared forth behind the theatrical man, whom he had never seen before that afternoon, and whom he never expected to see again. They hurried down one of the narrow, shadowy roads that almost made a labyrinth of the island. But fortune was with them. A turn in the road, which showed the waters of the bay not fifty yards ahead, revealed just in front of them two figures —two women—both small, but one a trifle taller than her companion.

"Hi there! You!" shouted the

manager, who, though among a people whose civilization was older than his own, considered them but heathen, and gave them the scant courtesy deserved by all so benighted in matters theatrical. The two figures suddenly stopped.

"Are you the girl who sang?"

"Yes," came the answer in a clear voice from the taller figure.

The manager was not slow in coming to the point.

"Would you like to be rich?"

Again the positive monosyllable, uttered with much eagerness.

"Good!" The manager's face could not be seen, but his satisfaction was revealed in his voice. "Just come with me to America, and your fortune's made!"

She stood silent, her head down, so that the manager prompted her impatiently: "Well?"

"I stay ad Japan," she said.

"Stay at Japan!" The manager

barely controlled himself. "Why, you can never get rich in this land. Now look-a-here—I'll call and see you to-morrow. Where do you live?"

"I don' want you call. I stay ad Japan."

This time the manager, seeing a possible fortune escaping him, and having in mind the courtesy due the heathen, delivered himself of a large Christian oath. "If you stay here, you're a fool. You'll never—"

The young man named Bigelow, who had watched the attempted bargaining in silence, broke in with some indignation. "Oh, let her go! She's got a right to do as she pleases, you know. Don't try to bully her into going to America if she'd rather stay here."

"Well, I suppose I can't use force to make her take a good thing," said the manager, ungraciously. He drew out his card-case and handed the girl his card. "Perhaps you'll change

your mind after you think about this a bit. If you do, my name and Tokyo address are on that card; just come round and see me. I'm going down to Bombay to look out for some Indian jugglers. I'll be gone about five months, and will be back in Tokyo before I start out on another trip to China, Corea, and the Philippines, and then off for home."

The girl took the card and listened in silence; when he finished, she courtesied, slipped a hand into that of her companion, and hurried down the narrow road.

After the two Americans had made their way back to the tea-garden, the older one at once sought out the proprietor.

"You know something about that girl. Come, tell us," he said, imperiously.

The proprietor was profusely courteous, but hesitated to speak of the one who had danced and sung. Fi-

nally he unbent grudgingly. He told the theatrical man and his companion that he knew next to nothing about her. She had come to him a stranger, and had offered her services. She refused to enter into the usual contract demanded of most geishas, and in view of her talents he could not afford to lose her. She was attracting large crowds to his gardens by her strange dances. Still he disliked and mistrusted her. She came only when it suited her whim, and on *fêtes* and occasions of this kind he had no means of knowing where she was. It was only by accident she had happened in this evening. Once he had attempted to follow her, but she had discovered him, and made him promise never to do such a thing again, threatening to stay away altogether if he did so. He spoke disparagingly of her:

"Beautiful, excellencies! Phow! You cannot see properly in the deceitful light of this honorable moon. A

cheap girl of Tokyo, with the blue-glass eyes of the barbarian, the yellow skin of the lower Japanese, the hair of mixed color, black and red, the form of a Japanese courtesan, and the heart and nature of those honorably unreliable creatures, alien at this country, alien at your honorable country, augustly despicable—a half-caste!"

II

IN WHICH WOMAN PROPOSES AND MAN DISPOSES

JACK BIGELOW was beset by the nakodas (professional match-makers). He was known to be one of the richest foreigners in the city, and the nakodas gave him no rest. Though he found them interesting, with the little comedies and tragedies to relate of the matches they had made and unmade, he had remained impregnable to their arts. He naturally shrank from such a union, and in this position he was strengthened by a promise he had made before leaving America to a college chum, his most intimate friend, a young English-Japanese student, named Taro Burton, that during his

stay in Japan he would not append his name to the long list of foreigners who for a short, happy, and convenient season cheerfully take unto themselves Japanese wives, and with the same cheerfulness desert them.

Taro Burton was almost a monomaniac on this subject, and denounced both the foreigners who took to themselves and deserted Japanese wives, and the native Japanese, who made such a practice possible. He himself was a half-caste, being the product of a marriage between an Englishman and a Japanese woman. In this case, however, the husband had proved faithful to his wife and children up to death; but then he had married a daughter of the nobility, a descendant of the proud Jokichi family, and the ceremony had been performed by an English missionary. Despite the happiness of this marriage, Taro held that the Eurasian was born to a sorrowful lot, and was bitterly

opposed to the union of the women of his country with men of other lands, particularly as he was Westernized enough to appreciate how lightly such marriages were held by the foreigners. It was true, of course, that after the desertion the wife was divorced, according to the law, but that, in Taro's mind, only made the matter more detestable.

For five years, up to their graduation four months before this, the young American and the young half-Japanese had been associated as closely together as it is possible for two young men to be, and a strong and deep affection existed between them.

It had been originally decided that the friends would make this trip together, which in Taro Burton's case was to be his return to the home he had left, and, with Jack Bigelow, was to be the beginning of a year's travel preliminary to entering the business of his father, who was a rich ship-

builder. But for some reason, which he never clearly set forth to his friend, Taro had backed out at almost the last minute; yet he had urged Jack to undertake the trip alone, and, under promise to follow shortly, finally had prevailed. So Jack Bigelow had made the long voyage to Japan, and had taken a pretty house of his own a short distance from Tokyo.

It was unfortunate that Taro could not have accompanied his friend, for, while the latter was not a weak character, he was easy-going, good-natured, and easily manipulated through his feelings.

The young Japanese, had he done nothing else, at least would have kept the nakodas and their offerings of matrimonial happiness on the other side of the American's doors. As it was, one of them in particular was so picturesque in appearance, quaint in speech, and persistent in his calls, that the young man had encouraged his

visits, until a certain jocular intimacy put their relations with each other on a pleasant and familiar footing.

It was this nakoda (Ido was his name, so he told Jack) who brought an applicant for a husband to his house, one day, and besought him at least to hold a look-at meeting with her.

"She is beautiful like unto the sun-goddess," he declared, with the extravagance of his class.

"The last was like the moon," said the young man, laughing. "Have you any stars to trot out?"

"Stars!" echoed the other, for a moment puzzled, and then, beaming with delighted enlightenment, "Ah, yes—her eyes, her feet, hair, hands, twinkling like unto them same stars! She prays for just a look-at meeting with your excellency."

"Well, for the fun of the thing, then," said the other, laughing. "I'm sure I don't mind having a look-at meeting with a pretty girl. Show

her into the zashishi (guest-room) and I'll be along in a moment. But, look here," he continued, "you'd better understand that I'm only going through this ceremony for the fun of the thing, mind you. I don't intend to marry any one—at all events, not a girl of that class."

"Nod for a leetle while whicheven?" persuaded the nakoda.

"Nod for a leetle while whicheven," echoed the young man, but the agent had disappeared.

When Jack, curious to know what she was like, she who was seeking him for a husband, entered the zashishi, he found the blinds high up and the sunshine pouring into the room. His eyes fell upon her at once, for the shoji at the back of the room was parted, and she stood in the opening, her head drooping bewitchingly. He could not see her face. She was quite small, though not so small as the average Japanese woman, and the two little

hands, clasped before her, were the whitest, most irresistible and perfect hands he had ever seen. He had heard of the beauty of the hands of the Japanese women, and was not surprised to find even a girl of this class —she was a geisha, of course, he told himself—with such exquisite, delicate hands. He knew she was holding them so that they could be seen to advantage, and her little affected pose amused and pleased him.

After he had looked at her a moment, she subsided to the mats and made her prostration. She was dressed very gayly in a red crafpe kimono, tied about with a purple obi. Her hair was dressed after the fashion of the geisha, with a flower ornament at top and long, pointed daggers at either side; but as she bowed her head to the mats, some pin in her hair escaped and slipped, and then a tawny, rebellious mass of hair, which was never meant to be worn smoothly, had fallen all about

her, tumbled into her eyes and over her ears, and literally covered her little crouching form. She shivered in shame at the mishap, and then knelt very still at his feet.

Bigelow was speechless. Never before in his life had he seen such hair. It was black, though not densely so, for all over it, even where it had been darkened with oil, there was a rich red tinge, and it was luxuriously thick and long and wavy.

"Good heavens!" he said, after the little figure had remained absolutely motionless for a full minute; "she'll hurt or cramp herself in that position."

The girl did not rise at the sound of his voice, but crept nearer to him, her hair still enshrouding her. It made him feel creepy, and annoyed and pleased and amused him altogether.

"Don't do that," he said. "Please stand up. Do!"

The nakoda told him to lift her to

her feet, and the young man did so, entangling his hands in her hair. When she stood up, he saw her face, which was oval and rosy, the lips very red. She still drooped her eyes, so that her face was incomplete.

"What's your name?" he asked her, gently. "And what do you want with me?"

Now she raised her head and he saw her eyes. They startled him. They were large, though narrow, and intensely, vividly blue. Before, with her hair neatly smoothed and dressed, he had noticed nothing extraordinary about her; now, with that rich red-black hair enshrouding her, and the long, blue eyes looking at him mistily, she was an eerie little creature that made him marvel. A Japanese girl with such hair and eyes! And yet the more he looked at her the more he saw that her clothes became her; that she was Japanese despite the hair and eyes. He did not try to explain

the anomaly to himself, but he could not doubt her nationality. There was no other country she could belong to.

"You are Japanese?" he finally asked, to make sure.

She nodded.

"I thought so, and yet—"

She smiled, and her eyes closed a trifle as she did so. She was all Japanese in a moment, and prettier than ever.

"You see—your eyes and hair—" he began again. She nodded and dimpled, and he knew she understood.

"What is it you want with me?" he asked, desiring rather to hear her speak than to learn her object, for this he knew.

She was solemn now. She flushed, and her eyes went down. To explain to him why she had come to him in this wise was a painful task. He could guess that, but she forced the words past her lips.

"To be your wife, my lord," she

said in English, and the queer quality of her voice thrilled him strangely.

This was the answer he knew was coming; nevertheless it stirred him in a way he had not expected. To have this wonderfully pretty girl before him, beseeching him to marry her—he who had as yet never dreamed of marriage for himself—was disturbing to his balance of mind. Nay, more—it was revolting. He shrank back involuntarily, wondering why she had come to him, and this wonder he put into words.

"But why do you want to marry me?" he asked.

The expression of her face was enigmatical now. She had ceased to blush and smile, and had become quite white. Suddenly she commenced to laugh—thrilling, elfish laughter, that rang out through the room, startling the echoes of the house.

"Why?" he repeated, fascinated.

She shrugged her shoulders. "I mus' make money," she said.

Of course this was her reason; he knew that before she spoke; but hearing her say so gave him pain. She was such a dainty little body.

"Oh, you need not sell yourself for that," he said, earnestly. "Why, I'll give you some—all you want. You're awfully young, aren't you? Just a little girl. *I* can't marry you. It wouldn't be fair to you."

Again she shrugged her shoulders, and spoke in Japanese to the nakoda.

"She says some one else will, then," he interpreted.

"All right," said the young man, almost bitterly.

She pretended to go towards the door, and then came back towards Bigelow.

"I seen you before," she announced, ingenuously.

"Where?" He was curiously interested. He fancied that her face was familiar.

"Ad tea-house."

"What tea-house?"

"On liddle bit island. You 'member? I dance like this-a-way." She performed a few steps.

"What! you that girl?" He knew her in an instant now. "How could you remember me?"

"You following me after dance with 'nudder American gent, and before thad some one point ad you—ole wooman thad always accompanying me."

"How did *she* know me?"

"She din know you to speag ad, bud—she saying you mos' reech barbarian ad all Japan."

"Oh, I see," he said, coldly.

"She tell me I bedder git marry with you."

"Indeed! Why?"

She hung her head a moment. "Because she know I luffing with you," she said.

"You loving with *me!*" He laughed outright. Her ingenuousness was entrancing.

"Yes," she said, and he, with masculine conceit, half believed her.

"But wouldn't you rather stay at the tea-house than get married?" he asked.

"Not nuff money that businesses," she returned.

"Do you do everything for money?"

"How I goin' to live?"

This question, answering a question, brought her back to the purpose of her visit. She held her little hands out to him.

"Ah, excellency, *pray* marry with me," she begged.

He took her hands quickly in his own. They were soft and so small. He could enclose them with one of his. They were delightful. He knew they were daintily perfumed, like everything else about her. He did not let them go.

"You ought not to marry, you know," he said to her, almost boyishly. "How old are you, anyhow?"

She ignored his question.

"I will be true, good wife to you forever," she said, and then swiftly corrected herself, as though frightened by her own words. "No, no, I make ridigulous mistage — not forever — jus' for liddle bit while — as you desire, augustness!"

"But I don't desire," he laughed nervously. "I don't want to get married. I won't be over a few months at most in Japan."

"Oh, jus' for liddle bit while marry with me," she breathed, entreatingly— "Pl-ease!"

It hurt him strangely to have her plead so. She looked delicate and refined and gentle. He put her hands quickly from him. She held them out and put them back again into his. Her eyes clouded, and he thought she was going to cry.

He was seized with a desire to keep her from weeping, if he could, this little creature, who seemed made for

anything but tears. He spoke from this impulse, without giving so much as a second's thought to the seriousness of his words.

"Don't cry. I'll marry you, of course, if you want me to."

He felt the hands in his own tremble.

"Thangs, excellency," she said, in a voice that was barely above a whisper, but it was a voice which had in it no note of joy.

There was pleasure, however, in the eyes of the nakoda. He had done a good piece of business, a most excellent piece of business, for the American gentleman was reputed to be able to buy hundreds and hundreds of rice-fields if he so cared to do. The nakoda came forward with a benignant smile to arrange the terms.

"She will cost only three hundred yen per down and fifteen yen each end per week. Soach a cheap price for a wife!"

It was the grinning face of this

matrimonial middleman that brought Bigelow back to his senses. He had said he would marry this little creature, whose limp hands he was holding. He dropped them as though they were the hands of one dead, and drew back.

"I won't do it!" he almost shouted. "Never!" Then he thought what must be the feelings of the little girl whose yoke of marriage he was refusing, and softened. "I wasn't thinking when I said I would. I don't want to marry a Japanese girl. I don't want to marry any girl. I wouldn't be doing right, and it wouldn't be fair to you." He paused, and then added, lamely, "I think I'd like you awfully, though, if I only knew you."

"But—" spoke up the nakoda, anxiously, who found his dream of a large fee fading into thin air.

Jack turned upon him quickly and gave him a sharp look, whereat he retired hurriedly.

A look of relief had come over the

girl's face when Jack had cried out that he would not marry her, and at this he wondered much. This relief in her face, however, was succeeded almost instantly by disappointment. But she spoke no further word. She gave him a single hurried glance from beneath fluttering eyelashes, courtesied until her head was almost on a level with his knees, and left him.

III

AN APPOINTMENT

JACK BIGELOW regarded the attempt of the nakoda and little Miss ——— (he had not even thought to ask her name) as an incident closed by the retirement of the one aspiring to wifehood from his sight. But in passing from his house she had not passed from his mind. This she occupied in spite of him, though it must be said that Jack made no effort to eject her.

He had been approached by many nakodas, who had the disposal of some most excellent wives, so they had told him, but never before had he consented to see one of their offerings; so the sensation of being asked in marriage by a girl whom he had only seen

once before, and that under circumstances which prevented his seeing her clearly, was altogether new. That he, John Hampden Bigelow, A.B.—he was very proud of that A.B., it had not cost him any particular labor—should be so sought out was not at all displeasing to his vanity, a quality that he prided himself on not possessing; this, notwithstanding the fact that he knew he had been approached because he had money.

He chuckled at the event several times during the day. He would keep this incident in mind, with all its detail, and make use of it now and then after he had returned home, when he was called upon to talk of his experiences in other lands. Of course, he would exaggerate a bit here and tone down a bit there, and would make the girl much prettier. No, the girl was pretty enough. This part of the incident could not be improved upon.

Jack mused about the morning's

episode during the entire day, and twice exploded into such laughter at the idea of his being asked for a husband that his little man hurried in to see if the gay-eyed barbarian was taking leave of his senses. In the evening he grew restless, and, having nothing else to do—so he told himself—he went out to the tea-garden on the little island which he had visited a few nights before. For an hour he waited for something—for something that did not appear. Finally, when the proprietor chanced to pass him, he asked in the manner of one casually interested:

"The girl who danced and sang the other night—is she here?"

She was not, for which the proprietor humbly asked pardon. She had not visited his poor place since the night the American had seen her.

For some reason Jack suddenly lost interest in the house and gardens, and returned to his home. But the next

night—again because he had nothing else to do—found him once more a guest at the tea-garden. This time he did not leave at the end of an hour; possibly because a weird dance was performed and a weird song sung by a girl with vivid blue eyes. He could not see their color from where he sat, but he knew they were blue.

After that he fell into the habit of visiting the gardens every night—these were dull times in Tokyo—never anything else to do. Most of the evenings so spent were intensely wearisome, but some few of them were not. It may only have been a series of coincidences, but it so happened that on the enjoyable evenings there was a weird dance and a weird song, and on the others there were not the graceful swayings of a little body, nor the wonderful music of a wonderful voice.

One evening, immediately after the song had been ended, he found himself striding down the same road he

had taken with the excited theatrical manager, and this without consciously having decided upon such a course. But he came down to the beach without seeing man or woman, and, though he would not acknowledge to himself that he was seeking any one, he carried away with him a keen sense of disappointment.

For two weeks the dulness of Tokyo remained unabated, so that the evenings offered nothing else to do save to go to the tea-gardens. At the end of that time, Jack, becoming honest with himself, admitted that there was nothing else, because there was nothing else he wanted to do, and while in this frank mood he let it become known to himself that there was nothing else in all the land of the rising sun that held so much of interest to him as did the girl who had offered herself to him for wife—nothing, indeed, in all the other lands of the earth. Why this was, he did not know, not

being one given to searching his own soul or the souls of others.

While he reclined at his ease one afternoon in the little room in which he lounged and smoked, he began to place her, in his imagination, here and there in the house, to try the effect.

He set her in one of his largest chairs, notwithstanding she would have been much more comfortable on the floor, in this same room, and she added wonderfully to the appearance of things. He stood her pensively by the tokonona; he nodded his head—very good! He placed her out beneath a cherry-tree in his garden; again he nodded approvingly. And a breakfast with her sitting opposite him! That would be like unto the breakfasts eaten by the angels in heaven—if angels partake of other than spiritual nourishment. Yes, she would be wonderfully effective in his little house, would harmonize with it greatly.

But what an odd figure she would

make in an American dress! He thought of her in a golfing costume, and smiled at his fancy. Nevertheless, even in the gowns worn by the women of his own country, she would be quaint and charming, he felt sure. She would be awkward, of course, but would be graceful even in her awkwardness. And she would transgress every polite convention, and would make herself all the more delightful in so doing. He compared her to the wives of some of the men he knew, to many of the girls he had met since girls had begun to have interest for him, and his admiration for her grew apace. He would be proud of her, he knew, for she was pretty and would attract attention; men like their wives to draw eyes towards them. She was unlike the wife of any of his countrymen he was likely to meet, and this also was much.

What would his parents think? They'd be angry at first, of course, but they'd give in; they loved him, and

couldn't resist her; no one could resist her. Anyhow, this prospective trouble was so far ahead that there was no use in wasting thought upon it now.

Why the deuce hadn't he learned her name? It was very monotonous this being compelled to think of her only as "she" and "her."

But why had she come to him asking him to marry her? He shook his head at that; he didn't quite like it. But —oh, well, you know, these Japs have no end of queer customs. This incident just illustrated one of them. She was clearly a superior kind of a girl. Not an ordinary geisha as he had thought when his eyes first fell on her. He had seen enough of the geishas at the tea-houses to know that she was of a different kind; to his Occidental eyes these last were most pleasing creatures, but—

Just then his man straggled through the room and brought an end to his musing. Marry her? He sat up

straight. What had he been thinking about? The idea was absurd. It was absurd for him to think about marrying any one. He got to his feet, called back his man, and ordered a jinrikisha to be brought to him. He rode off to Tokyo to forget all about it.

But it would not be forgotten. After he had left the jinrikisha he caught sight of her on the opposite side of the street, turning a corner. He hurried after her, but when he reached the corner she was nowhere to be seen. He looked into all the shops on either side of the street for a distance of a hundred yards, but saw no one who bore the least resemblance to her. Then he tramped about the immediate vicinity, his sense of loss deepening with each minute, until he noticed that the shop-keepers were eying him with suspicion. He gave up the search and started back to his jinrikisha.

As he was swinging along disconsolately, his eyes lighted upon another

person whom he knew—Ido, the nakoda —and him Jack did not let escape. He pounced down upon him, and clapped a hand upon his shoulder.

"Hallo there!" he called out.

Ido started back as if he had been set upon by an enemy. He was unused to such emphatic greetings. But when he saw who his assailant was he slipped a smile upon his face, smirked and bowed, and hoped that the august American's days were filled with joy.

"They'll do," Jack answered. "And how are things with you? Business good? Making many matches?"

Ido had introduced four persons to incomparable happiness—which was to say, he had brought about two marriages. Had his lordship come into like happiness?

No, his lordship had not.

"You making gradest mistage you' whole lifetime," Ido assured him. "You nod yit seen Japanese woman

that please you for wife? No? I know nodder girl you' excellency nod seen yit. Mos' beautiful in Japan. You like see her?"

"No, I've seen enough. By-the-way, Ido, what's become of the girl you brought around to my place? Married yet?" Jack put on a look of indifferent interest.

"No, excellency."

For one disinterested, Jack found much relief in this answer.

"But I thing she going to be," Ido went on, calmly. "Two, three—no, two odder gents—what you say?—consider—yes, consider her."

These words drove relief from the disinterested Jack's heart, and instantly set up in its place a raging jealousy. But he compelled himself to remark, quite easily, "You don't say!"

Ido confirmed his statement with a nod that was almost a bow.

"A very pretty girl," Jack commented, loftily.

Ido's reply was confined to a mere "Yes." There was no use going into ecstasies when no bargain was in sight.

"I think I'll go around to see her, and congratulate her," Jack went on. "Where does she live?"

"I regretfully cannot tell."

"Ah, well, let it go then. But, say, I really would like to see her again before she's married. Rather took a fancy to her, you know. Couldn't you bring her to call on me to-morrow morning?"

"I going to be very busy to-morrow." Seeing no chance of earning a marriage-fee, he saw no reason for taking the trip.

"I'll pay you for your trouble—needn't worry about that."

Perhaps Ido could arrange to come; yes, now that he thought again, he knew he could come.

So it was settled that he and the girl should visit Jack at ten o'clock the next day.

IV

IN WHICH MAN PROPOSES

THE announcement of his man that Ido and his charge had arrived contained no news for Jack, for he had been watching the road from Tokyo since nine o'clock, and had seen them while they were yet afar off. Nevertheless, he did not enter the zashishi until his man came to him with word that guests from the city were awaiting him, and then he had no definite idea of what he intended to do.

She was dressed exactly as she had been on her previous visit, and she made obeisance almost to the floor, in greeting him, as she then had done. He hastened her recovery from the deep courtesy by taking her hands

and raising her to an upright posture.

"You have come to see me again? I am very glad to see you," he said, with eager politeness.

"Nakoda say you wish see me. Tha's why I come." There was not a trace of her former coquetry in her manner.

"Yes, I had to send Ido after you. I don't suppose you would ever have let me see you again if I had not."

She shrugged her shoulders imperceptibly. "Me you don' wish marrying with. You send me 'way. What I do?"

"We could be capital friends, even if we didn't care to marry, couldn't we?"

"Frien'? I don' wan' frien'," she returned, coldly.

"But I'd like to have you for my friend, all the same, though I'm afraid it's not possible. Ido"—he hesitated—"Ido says you're going to be married, you know."

She inclined her head.

"You're not married yet, are you?" he asked in alarm, forgetting that he had put this same question to the nakoda the day before.

"Nod yit."

"Do you—um—like him?"

"Which one, my lord?" She looked up at him innocently.

"Oh, both of them!" He was beginning to get angry. He would find pleasure in laying violent hands upon the two, one at a time.

"Jus' liddle bit, augustness."

"Better than you do me?" he demanded, jealously.

She shook her head decisively. "You nod so ole, an nod so — hairy-like." She rubbed her little hands over her face, by which he understood that the two wore beards. They were doubtless of his own country.

He hardly knew what to say next, and the silence grew embarrassing to him. She broke it by remarking, very quietly:

"Nakoda inform me you wan' make liddle bit talk ad me."

He turned to the match-maker, who was pretending deep interest in a framed drawing on the wall. "Say, Ido, just step into the next room a minute, will you?"

He turned back to the girl, as soon as Ido had obeyed him, with extravagant alacrity.

"You have never even told me your name," he said.

"Yuki."

"That means 'Snowflake,' doesn't it? I like it. Well now, Yuki, mayn't I visit you at your home, before you are married?"

He was anxious to see what her people were like, and how she lived.

"Mos' poor house in all Tokyo—so liddle bit house augustness nod lige come."

"But I don't care if it is. I want to come anyhow. I want to see you, not the house. Won't you tell me where you live?"

She shook her head. "No," she said with simple directness, and then added as an after-thought, "House too small. You altogedder too big to enter thad liddle bit insignificant hovel."

Her answer gave him offence. He wondered why she should dissemble, wondered whether she was laughing at him. A glance at her, however, and his distrust vanished. She seemed such a simple little body, yet he knew he did not understand her.

Her eyes, which she had kept turned downward, slowly uplifted and looked questioningly into his own. Such wonderful eyes! Such a simple, exquisite face! He was suddenly suffused with a great wave of tenderness, and he bent low, and gently made prisoners of her hands. However indefinite his purpose had been up to this time, it was definite enough now.

"So you remember, Yuki, what you asked me when you were here before?"

"Yes." She still gazed at him questioningly.

"Would you like to — would you rather marry me than one of those other fellows?" he said, softly.

"Yes," again, in the smallest voice this time.

He hesitated, and she asked, quickly, "You *wan'* me do so?"

"That's just what I want, Yuki, dear," he whispered, drawing her hands to his lips.

"All ride." She trembled—perhaps shivered is the better word—as she said this, but gave no other sign of emotion.

Before Jack could so much as touch his lips to her forehead, Ido entered smiling his professional blessing. It was evident that in the other room he had found no drawing to distract his attention, and a large new peep-hole in the immaculate shoji indicated where he had given all his eyes and ears to what was going on, and he could wait no longer to press his claim.

Jack, seeing an unpleasant duty before him, and desiring to have done with it at once, told Yuki that he would be back in a minute, and led the nakoda into the room out of which he had just come.

Ido immediately began to make terms. This part was loathsome to the young man.

"Why," he said, hotly, "if we're to be married, she can have all she wants and needs."

That wouldn't do at all, the nakoda told him, warily. There would have to be a marriage settlement and a stated allowance agreed upon. He would have to pay more, also, as she was a maid and not a widow.

When the ugly terms of the agreement were completed, the nakoda bowed himself out, and Jack went back to Yuki. He found her changed; her simplicity had left her, and her coquetry had returned. She stood off from him, and he felt constrained and awk-

ward. After a time she demanded of him, with a shrewd inflection in her voice:

"You goin' to lige me, excellency?"

"No question of that," he answered promptly, smiling.

"No," she repeated, "tha's sure thing," and then she laughed at her own assurance, and she was so pretty he wanted to kiss her, but she backed from him in mock alarm.

"Tha's nod ride," she declared, "till we marry."

"God speed the day!" he said, with devout joyousness. Still approaching her, as she backed from him, he questioned her boyishly:

"And you? Will you like me?"

She surveyed him critically. Then she nodded emphatically. They laughed together this time, but when he approached her she grew fearful. He did not want to frighten her.

"You god nod anudder wife?" she asked.

"No! Good heavens!"

"I god nod anudder hosban'," she informed him, complacently.

"I should hope not."

"Perhaps," she said, "you marrying with girl in Japan thad god marry before. Me? I *never*."

"No, of course not." He didn't quite understand what she was driving at.

Then she said: "You pay more money ad liddle girl lige me whad nod been marry before?"

He recoiled and frowned heavily at her.

"I settled that matter with the nakoda," he said, coldly.

Seeing he was displeased, she tried to conciliate him. She smiled at him, engagingly, coaxingly.

"You don' lige me any more whicheven."

But his face did not clear up. She had hurt him deeply by her reference to money.

"Perhaps you don' want me even," she suggested, tentatively. "I bedder go 'way. Leave you all 'lone."

She turned and was making her way slowly out of the room, when he sprang impetuously after her.

"Don't, Yuki!" he cried, and caught her eagerly in his arms. She yielded herself to his embrace, though she was trembling like a little frightened child. For the first time he kissed her.

After she had left him, he stared with some wonder at the reflection of himself in a mirror. So he was to be married, was he? Yes, there was no getting out of it now. As for that, he didn't want to get out of it—of this he was quite sure. He was very well content—nay, he was enthusiastically happy with what the future promised.

But his happiness might have been felt in less measure if his eyes, instead of staring at his mirrored likeness, could have been fixed on Yuki.

She had borne herself with a joyous air to the jinrikisha, but once within it, and practically secure from observation, the life had seemingly gone out of her. The brown of her skin had paled to gray, and all the way to Tokyo her eyes shifted neither to right nor left, but stared straight ahead into nothingness, and once, when Ido looked down, he found that they were filled with tears.

V

IN WHICH THE EAST AND THE WEST ARE UNITED

A FEW days later they were married. It was a very quiet little tea-drinking ceremony, and, unlike the usual Japanese wedding, there was not the painful crowd of relatives and friends attendant. In fact, no one was present, besides themselves, save Jack's man and maid and the nakoda, while Yuki herself sang the marriage song.

They started housekeeping in an ideal spot. Their house, a bit of art in itself, was built on the crest of a small hill. On all sides sloped and leaned green highlands, rich in foliage and warm in color. Beyond these smaller hillocks towered the jagged

background of mountain-peaks, with the halo of the skies bathing them in an eternal glow. A lazy, babbling little stream dipped and threaded its way between the hillocks, mirroring on its shining surface the beauty of the neighboring hills and the inimitable landscapes pictured on the canvas of God—the skies—and seeming like a twisted rainbow of ever-changing and brilliant colors. But no surges disturbed its waters, even far beyond where it emptied into the mellow Bay of Tokyo.

From their elevation on the hill they could see below them the beautiful city of Tokyo, with its many-colored lights and intricate maze of streets. And all about them the hills, the meadows, the valleys and forests bore eloquent testimony to the labor of the Color Queen.

Pink, white, and blushy-red twigs of cherry and plum blossoms, idly swaying, flung out their suave fra-

grance on the flattered breeze, the volatile handmaid of young May, who had freed all the imprisoned perfumes, unhindered by the cynic snarl of the jealous winter, and with silent, pursuasive wooing had taught the dewy-tinctured air to please all living nostrils. So from the glowing and thrilling thoughts that tremble on the young tree of life is love distilled. and, unmindful of the assembling of the baffled powers of cold caution and warning fear, the heart is filled with fountain tumults it cannot dissemble.

Jack Bigelow was fascinated and bewildered at the turn events had taken. He was very good and gentle to her, and for several days after the ceremony she seemed quite happy and contented. Then she disappeared, and for a week he saw nothing of her.

He greatly missed her—his little bride of three or four days. He longed ardently for her return, and her absence alarmed him. Her little arts and

witcheries had grown on him even in this short period of their acquaintance.

Towards the end of the week she slipped into the house quietly, and went about her household duties as though nothing unusual had occurred. She did not offer to tell him where she had been, and he felt strangely unwilling to force her confidence.

Instead of becoming better acquainted with her, each day found him more puzzled and less capable of knowing or understanding her. Now she was clinging, artless, confiding, and again shrewd and elfish. Now she was laughing and singing and dancing as giddily as a little child, and again he could have sworn she had been weeping, though she would deny it stoutly, and pooh-pooh and laugh away such an idea.

He asked her one day how she would like to be dressed in American clothes. She mimicked him. She mimicked everything and every one, from the

warbling of the birds to the little man and maid who waited on them.

"I loog lige this," she said, and humped a bustle under her ridiculously tight omeshi, and slipped his large sun hat over her face. Then she laughed out at him, and flung her arms tightly about his neck.

"You wan' me be American girl?"

"You are a witch, Yuki-san," he said.

"I wan' new dress," she returned, promptly, and held a pink little palm out. He frowned. He almost disliked her when she spoke of money. He filled her hands, however, with change from his pockets, and when she broke away from him, which she did as soon as she had obtained the money, he wanted to take it back. Her pretty laughter sifted out to him through the shoji at the other side, and he knew she was mocking him again.

"It is her natural love of dress and finery," he told himself. "It is the

eternal feminine in her, and it is bewitching."

The next day, as she sat opposite to him, eating her infinitesimal bit of a breakfast—a plum, a small fish, and a tiny cup of tea—all on a little black lacquer tray, he announced mysteriously that he was going "on business" to the city.

She desired to accompany him, as became a dutiful wife.

No, he told her, that was impossible. His mission was of a secret nature, which could not be divulged until his return.

Then she insisted that she would follow behind him after the manner of a slave; and when he laughed at her, she begged quite humbly and gently that he would condescend to honorably permit her to go with him, and then he was for telling her his whole pretty story, and the surprise he had concocted to please her, when she grew capricious and insisted that she would

not stir one little bit of an inch from the house, and that he must go all alone to the city and attend to his great, magnificent business!

He went down to Tokyo, and in his boyish, blundering fashion he purchased silk and crêpe and linen sufficient for fifty gowns for her.

She thanked him extravagantly. She could not imagine what she would do with so much finery. Her honorable person was augustly insignificant, and could not accommodate so much merchandise.

"Now," he thought with inward satisfaction, "that ghost of a money question will be laid. She has everything she wants and shall have. I want to do for her, and give her things without being wheedled into it. It is that which irritates me."

But a few days later she came to him breathless and flustered. Lo! some one had stolen all the beautiful goods he had bought her. It was

neither their man nor maid. No, no! that was altogether impossible. They were honest, simple folk, who feared the gods. But they were all quite gone—where she could not say. Who had taken them, she could not guess. Perhaps she, her unworthy self, and he, his honorable augustness, had been extremely wicked in their former state, and the gods were now punishing them in their present life. It would be wicked and unavailing to attempt to search for the missing goods. It was the will of the gods. Maybe the gods had been offended at such ruthless extravagance. Ah, yes, that was a better solution of the theft. Of course the gods were angry. What gods would not be? It was sinful to buy so many things at once.

She affected great distress over the loss, and her husband, somewhat bewildered at her elaborate apologies for the thief who had stolen them, tried to comfort her by saying he would

buy her double the quantity again, whereat she became very solemn.

"No, no," she said. "Bedder give me money to buy. I will purchase jus' liddle bit each time—to please the gods."

VI

THE ADVENTURESS

THE man in the hammock was not asleep, for in spite of the lazy, lounging attitude, and the hat which hid the gray eyes beneath, he was very much awake, and keenly interested in a certain small individual who was sitting on a mat a short distance removed from him. He had invited her several times to reduce that distance, but up to the present she had paid no heed to his suggestions. She was amusing herself by blowing and squeezing between her lower lip and teeth the berry of the winter cherry, from which she had deftly extracted the pulp at the stem. She continued this strange occupation in obstinate indifference to

the persuasive voice from the hammock.

"I say, Yuki, there's room for two in this hammock. Had it made on purpose."

She continued her cherry-blowing without so much as making a reply, though one of her blue eyes looked at him sideways, and then solemnly blinked.

"What's the matter, Yuki? Got the dumps again, eh?"

No reply.

"Look here, Mrs. Bigelow, I'll come over and elope forcibly with you if you don't obey me."

She dimpled scornfully.

"Ah, that's right! Smile, Yuki. You're so pretty, so bewitching, so irresistible when you smile."

Yuki nodded her head coolly.

"How you lige me smiling forever?" she suggested.

"That wouldn't do," he said, grinning at her from beneath his tipped hat. "That would be tiresome."

"Tha's why I don' smiling to-day."

"Why?"

"All yistidy I giggling."

He shouted with laughter at her.

"Move your mat here, Yuki," indicating a spot close to his hammock. "I want to talk to you."

"My ears are—"

"Too small to hear from that distance," finished her husband. "Come."

"Thangs," with great dignity, "I am quide comfor'ble. I don' wan' sit so near you, excellency."

"Why, pray?"

"Why? Hm! I un'erstan'. Tha's because I jus' your liddle bit slave."

"You're my wife, you little bit fraud."

"Wife? Oh, I dunno." She pretended to deliberate.

"Then you've tricked me into a false marriage, madam," declared her husband, with great wrath.

"Tha's fault nakoda."

"What is?"

"Thad you god me for wife, and," slowly, "servant."

"Fault! Come here, servant, then. Servants must obey."

"Nod so bad master, making such grade big noises," she laughed back daringly. "Besides, servant must sit long way off from thad same noisy master."

"And wife?"

"Oh, jus' liddle bit nearer." She edged perhaps half an inch closer to him. "Wife jus' liddle bit different from servant."

"Look here, Mrs. Bigelow, you're not living up to your end of the contract. You swore to honor and obey—"

She laughed mockingly.

"Yes, you did, madam!"

"I din nod. Tha's jus' ole Kirishitan marriage."

He sat up amazed.

"What do you know of the Christian marriage service?"

"Liddle bit."

"Come over here, Yuki."

"You like me sing ad you?"

"Come over here."

"How you like me danze?—liddle bit summer danze?"

"Come over here. What's a summer dance, anyhow?"

She ran lightly indoors, and was back so soon that she seemed scarcely to have left him. She had slipped on a red-and-yellow flimsy kimono, and had decked her hair and bosom with flaming poppies.

"Tha's summer sunshine," she said, spreading her garment out on each side with a joyous little twirl. "I am the Sun-goddess, and you?—you jus' the col', dark earth. I will descend and warm you with my sunshine." For a moment she stood still, her head thrown back, her face shining, her lips parted and smiling, showing the straight little white teeth within. Then she danced softly, ripplingly, back and forth. The summer winds were sigh-

ing and laughing with her. Her face shone out above her lightly swerving figure, her little hands and bare arms moved with inimitable grace.

"You are a genius," he said to her, when she had subsided, light as a feather blown to his feet.

"Tha's sure thing," she agreed, roguishly.

Her assurance in herself always tickled him immensely. He threw his hat at her with such good aim that it settled upon her head. She approved his clever shot, laughed at him, and then, pulling it over her eyes, lay down on the mats and imitated his favorite attitude to a nicety. He laughed uproariously. He was in fine humor. They had been married over a month now, and she had not left him save that first time. He was growing pretty sure of her now.

She perceived his good-humor, and immediately bethought herself to take advantage. She put the rim of his hat

between her teeth, imitated a monkey, and crawled towards him, pretending to beg for her performance. He stretched his long arms out and tried to reach her, but she was far enough off to elude him.

"You godder pay," she said, "for thad nize entertainments I giving you."

He threw her a sen. She made a face. "That all?" she said, in a dreadfully disappointed voice, but, despite her acting, he saw the greedy eagerness of her eyes. All the good-humor vanished.

"Look here, Yuki," he said, with a disagreeable glint in his eyes, "you've had a trifle over fifty dollars this week. I don't begrudge you money, but I'll be hanged if I'm going to have you dragging it out of me on every occasion and upon every excuse you can make. You have no expenses. I can't see what you want with so much money, anyhow."

"I godder save," said Yuki, myste-

riously, struck with this brilliant excuse for her extravagance.

"What for?"

"Why, same's everybody else. Some day I nod have lods money. Whad I goin' do then? Tha's bedder save, eh?"

"I've married you. I'll never let you want for anything."

"Oh, you jus' marry me for liddle bit while."

"You've a fine opinion of me, Yuki."

"Yes, fine opinion of you," she repeated after him.

"There's enough money deposited in a bank in Tokyo to last you as long as you live. If it's ever necessary for me to leave you for a time, you will not want for anything, Yuki."

"But," she said, argumentatively, "when you leaving me I henceforward a widder. I nod marry with you any longer. Therefore I kin nod take your money." This last with heroic pride.

"Boo! Your qualms of conscience

about using my money are, to say the least, rather extraordinary."

"When you leaving me—" she commenced again.

"Why do you persist in that? I have no idea of leaving you."

"What!" She was quite frightened. "You goin' stay with me forever!" There was far more fear than joy in her voice.

"Why not?" he demanded, sharply, watching her with keen, savage eyes.

"My lord," she said, humbly, "I could nod hear of thad. It would be wrong. Too grade sacrifice for you honorable self."

He was not sure whether she was laughing at him or not.

"You needn't be alarmed," he said, gruffly. "I'm not likely to stay here forever." He turned his back on her.

Suddenly he felt her light little hand on his face. She was standing close by the hammock. He was still very angry and sulky with her. He closed

his eyes and frowned. He knew just how she was looking ; knew if he glanced at her he would relent ignominiously. She pried his eyes gently open with her fingers, and then kissed them, as softly as a tiny bird might have done. Gradually she crawled into the hammock with him, regardless of non-assistance.

"Augustness," she said, her arms about his neck now, though she was sitting up and leaning over him. "Listen ad me."

"I'm listening."

"Look ad me."

He looked, frowned, smiled, and then kissed her. She laughed under her breath, such a queer, triumphant, mocking small laugh. It made him frown again, but she kissed the frown into a smile once more. Then she sat up.

"Pray excuse me. I wan' sit ad your feet and talk ad you."

"Can't you talk here?" he demanded, jealously.

"Nod so well. I gittin' dazzled. Permit me," she coaxed. He released her grudgingly. She sat close to him on the floor. She sighed heavily, hypocritically.

"What is it now?"

"Well, you know I telling you about those moneys."

"Yes," he said, wearily. "Let's shut up on this money question. I'm sick of it."

"I lige make confession ad you."

"Well?"

"I god seventeen brudders and sisters!" she said, with slow and solemn emphasis.

"What!" He almost rolled out of the hammock in his amazement.

"Seventeen!" She nodded with ominous tragedy in her face and voice.

"Where do they live?"

"Alas! in so poor part of Tokyo."

"And your father and mother?"

"Alas! Also thad fadder an' mudder so ole lige this." She illustrated,

bowing herself double and walking feebly across the floor, coughing weakly.

"Well?" he prompted sharply.

"I god take all thad money thad ole fadder an mudder an' those seventeen liddle brudders an sisters. Tha's all they god in all the whole worl'."

"But don't any of them work? Aren't any of them married? What's the matter with them all?"

"Alas! No. All of them too young to worg or marry, excellency."

"*All* of them too young?"

"Yes. Me—how ole *I* am? Oldes' of all! I am twenty-eight—no, thirty years ole," she declared, solemnly.

He nearly collapsed. He knew she was a mere child; knew, moreover, that she was lying to him. She had done so before.

"Even if you are thirty, I fail to see how you can have seventeen brothers and sisters younger than yourself."

She lost herself a moment. Then she

said, triumphantly, "My fadder have two wives!"

He surveyed her in studious silence a moment. Her attitude of trouble and despair did not deceive him in the slightest. Nevertheless, he wanted to laugh outright at her, she was such a ridiculous fraud.

"Do you know what they'd call you in my country?" he said, gravely.

She shook her head.

"An adventuress!"

"Ah, how *nize!*" She sighed with envious blissfulness. "I wish I live ad your country—be adventuressesses."

"How much do you want now, Yuki?"

She pretended to calculate on his fingers.

"Twenty-five dollar," she announced.

He gave it to her, and she slipped it into the bosom of her kimono. He watched her curiously, wondering what she did with all the money she secured from him.

All of a sudden she put this question to him.

"Sa-ay, how much it taking go ad America?"

"How much? Oh, not much. Depends how you go. Four hundred, or five hundred dollars, possibly."

She groaned. "How much come ad Japan?"

"The same."

She sighed. "Sa-ay, kind augustness, I wan' go ad America. Pray give me money go there."

"I'll take you some day, Yuki."

She retreated before this offer.

"Ah, thangs — yes, some day, of course." Then, after a meditative moment: "Sa-ay, it taking more money than thad three-four hundled dollar whicheven?"

"Yes; about that much again for incidentals—possibly more."

She sighed hugely this time, and he knew she was not affecting.

A few days later, poking among her

pretty belongings, as he so much liked to do—she was out in the garden gathering flowers for their dinner-table—he found her little jewel-box. Like everything else she possessed, it was daintily perfumed. At the top lay the few pieces of jewelry he had bought for her on different occasions when he had taken her on trips to the city. He lifted the top tray, and then he saw something that startled him. It was a roll of bank-bills. He took it out and counted it. There was not quite one hundred and fifty dollars. He calculated all he had given her. It amounted to a little over twice this sum. She had been saving, after all! What was her object?

And, his suspicions awakened by this discovery, he searched uneasily further through her apartments, and discovered, rolled like a huge piece of carpet and covered over by a large basket, the crêpe and silks she had protested were stolen.

VII

MY WIFE!

THE second time his wife left him, Jack Bigelow was very wretched. He missed her exceedingly, though he would not have admitted it, for he was also very angry with her.

When she had gone away that first time, so soon after their marriage, he had not felt her absence as he did now, for then she had not become a necessity to him. But she had lived with him now two whole months, and had become a part of his life. She was not a mere passing fancy, and he knew it was folly to endeavor so to convince himself, as in his resentment at her treatment he was trying to do.

The house was desolate without her.

Everywhere there were evidences of his little girl. Here a pair of her tiny sandals, some piece of tawdry kanzashi for her hair, her koto, samisen, and little drum; in the zashishi, in her own little room, and all over the house lingered the faint odor of her favorite perfume, so subtle it made the young man weak.

He grew to hate the silence of the rooms. Their household had always been small, with just a man and maid to wait on them; and now only one presence gone from it, and yet how painfully quiet the place had grown! He realized what all her little movements had become to him. He stayed out-doors as much as he could, only to return restlessly to the house, with a faint hope that perhaps she was hiding somewhere in it, and playing some prank on him, as she was fond of doing, bursting out from some unexpected place of hiding. But there was no trace of her anywhere; and when the

second day actually passed, the realization that she was indeed gone forced itself home to him, leaving him stupid with rage and despair.

He was bitterly angry with her. She had no right to leave him like this, without a word of explanation. How was he to know where she had gone or what might happen to her? And the thought of anything dire really overtaking her nearly drove him distracted. He hung around the balconies of the house, wandered down into the garden, and strayed restlessly about. And all the time he knew he was waiting for her, and in the waiting doubling his misery.

She came back in four days, slipped into the house noiselessly and ran up to her room. He heard her, knew she had returned, but checked his first impulse to go to her, and threw himself back on a couch, where he assumed a careless attitude, which he relentlessly changed to a stern, unapproachable, forbidding one.

Suddenly he heard her voice. It came floating down the stairs, every weird minor note thrilling, mocking, fascinating him. "Toko-ton-yare ron-ton-ton!" she sang. Then the voice ceased a moment. She was waiting for him to call her. He did not move. He was certainly very angry with her. He would not forgive her readily.

She began beating on her drum. He heard her making a great noise in the little room up-stairs, and understood her object. She was trying to attract him. Suddenly she whirled down the stairs and burst in on him with a merry peal of laughter.

He ignored her sternly. She ceased her noise and laughter, and, approaching him, studied him with her head tilted bewitchingly on one side.

"You angery ad me, excellency?" she inquired with solicitude.

No reply.

"You very *mad* ad me, augustness?"

Still no reply.

"You very *cross* ad me, my lord?"

Jack regarded her in contemptuous silence.

She shouted now, a high, mocking, joyous note in her laughter.

"Hah! You very, very, very, very *affended*, Mister Bigelow?"

"It seems to please you, apparently," said Jack, scathingly, wasting his sarcasm, and turning his eyes from her.

She laughed wickedly.

"Ah, tha's so nize."

"What is?" he demanded, sharply.

"Thad you loog so angery. My! You loog like grade big—whad you call thad?—toranadodo." She knew how to pronounce "tornado," but she wanted to make him laugh. She failed in her purpose, however. She tried another way.

"*How* you change!" She sighed with beatific delight.

Jack growled.

"Dear me! I thing you grown more nize-loogin," she said.

Jack got up and walked across to the window, turning his back deliberately on her, and whistling with forced gayety, his hands in his pockets. She approached him with feigned timidity and stood at his elbow.

"You glad see me bag, excellency?"

"No!" shortly.

This emphatic answer frightened her. She was not so sure of herself, after all.

"You wan' me go 'way?" she asked, in the smallest voice.

"Yes."

She loitered only a moment, and then "Ah-bah" (good-bye) she said softly.

He felt, for he would not turn around to see, that she was crossing the room slowly, reluctantly. He heard the shoji pushed aside, and then shut to. He was alone! He sprang forward and called her name aloud. She came running back to him and plunged into his arms. He held her close, almost

fiercely. The anger was all gone. His face was white and drawn. The dread of losing her again had overpowered him. When she tried to extricate herself from his arms, he would not let her go. He sat down on one of the chairs, and held her on his knee. She was laughing now, laughing and pouting at his white face.

"My crashes!" she cried. "You loog lige ole Chinese priest ad the temple." She pulled a long face, and drew her pretty eyes up high with her finger tips; then she chanted some solemn words, mocking mirthfully her ancestors' religion.

But her husband was grave. He had not the heart to find mirth even in her naughtiness.

"Yuki," he said, "you must be serious for a moment and listen to me."

"I listenin', Mr. Solemn-Angery-Patch!" She meant "Cross-patch." "You loog lige—"

"Where did you go?"

"Oh, jus' liddle bit visit."

"Where did you go?" he repeated, insistently.

"Sa-ay, I forgitting."

"Answer me."

She pretended to think, and then suddenly to remember, sighing hypocritically the while.

"I lige forgitting," she said.

"Forgetting what?"

"Where I been."

"Why?"

"Tha's so sad. Alas! I visiting thad ole fadder an' mudder ninety-nine and one hundled years ole, and those seventeen liddle brudders an' sisters. You missing me very much?" she changed from the subject of her whereabouts.

"No!" he said, shortly, stung by her falsity.

"I don' sing so!"

"Where were you, Yuki?"

"Now, whad you wan' know for, sinze you don' like me whicheven?"

"Did I say so?"

"You say you don' miss."

"I lied," he said, bitterly. "Where were you?"

"Jus' over cross street, see my ole friend ad tea-garden."

"I thought you said you were visiting your people?"

She was not at all abashed.

"Sa-ay, firs' you saying you miss me; then thad you lie. Sa-ay, you big lie, I jus' liddle bit lie."

"Yuki, listen to me. If you leave me like this again, you need never come back. Do you understand?"

"Never?"

"I mean that."

" Whad you goin' do? Git you nudder wife?"

He pushed her from him in savage disgust. She laughed with infinite relish.

He sat down a little distance from her, and put his face wearily between his hands. Yuki regarded him a moment,

and then she silently went to him, pulled his hands down, and kissed his lips.

"I have missed you terribly," he said, hoarsely.

She was all compunction.

"I very sawry. I din know you caring very much for poor liddle me, an p'raps I bedder nod come bag ad you."

"Why did you come, then?" he asked, gently.

"I coon' help myself," she said, forlornly. "My feet aching run bag ad you, my eyes ill to see you, my hands gone mad to touch you."

She had grown in a moment serious, but also melancholy.

After a pause she said, more brightly, "I bringin' you something—something so nize, dear my lord."

"What is it, Yuki, dear?" He was reluctant to let her go even for a moment.

"Flowers," she said — "summer flowers."

He released her, and she brought them to him, a huge bunch of azaleas. She buried her delightful little nose in them. "Ah," she said, "flowers mos' sweetes' thing in all the worl', an' all them same flowers for you, for you."

"Where did you get them, dear?" he asked, taking her hands instead of the flowers, and drawing her, flowers and all, into his arms. She faltered a little, and then said, with the old daring smile flashing back in her face: "Nize Japanese gents making me present those flowers."

He caught her wrists in a grip of iron. "What do you mean?" he demanded, fiercely, wild jealousy assailing him.

She pulled herself from him, and regarded the little wrists ruefully.

"Ain' you shamed?" she accused.

"Yes!" He kissed the little wrists with an inward sob. "Tell me all, my little one. Please do not hide anything from me. I can't bear it."

"Thad Japanese gent wanter marry with me," she informed him, calmly smiling, and dimpling as if it amused her, and then making a face to show him her feelings in the matter.

"My! How he *adore* me!" she added, vividly.

"Marry with you! What do you mean? You are my wife."

"Yes, bud *he* din know thad," she said, consolingly; "an' see, I bring his same flowers unto you."

He took them from her arms. They were all crushed now, and it distressed her. No Japanese can bear to see a flower abused. She fingered some of the petals sadly; then she sighed, looking up at him with tears in her eyes.

"Tha's mos' beautiful thing' in all the whole worl'," she said, indicating the flowers — "so pure, so kind, so sweet."

"I know something more beautiful and sweet, and—and pure."

"Ah, whad?" she said, her face shining, the pupils of the blue eyes so large as to make them look almost black.

"My wife!" he breathed.

VIII

YUKI'S HOME

EVERY day, all unknown to Yuki, her husband looked in her little jewel-box. The pile of bills grew larger. He no longer refused her requests for money. The fund was quite large now. The last time he had counted it there were four hundred dollars. He took a whim to make it five hundred, and that same day gave her a clear hundred dollars.

She had given him a solemn promise never to leave him again without his knowledge and consent, and for a whole month she had kept steadfastly at home. It was the happiest month in his life, a month that spelled naught else but joy and sunshine.

But the day after he had given her the hundred dollars she came to him and begged very humbly to be permitted to visit her old father and mother and seventeen little brothers and sisters. She still kept up this deception. He refused her almost gruffly. He had grown selfish and spoiled under her care. All the day, however, he watched her suspiciously, fearful lest she should slip away. And he was right. In the evening, when she had left him for a moment, he saw her leaving the house. He took his hat, and, keeping at a good distance from her, but never losing sight of her for a moment, he followed her.

Twilight was falling. Softly, tenderly, the darkness swept away the exquisite rays of red and yellow that the departing sun had left behind, for it was crossing the waters, until, far in the distance, it dipped deep down as though swallowed up by the bay.

Yuki was walking rapidly towards

Tokyo. It was only a short distance, but nevertheless the thought of her little tender feet treading it alone, and at such an hour, unnerved her husband. Whatever her mission, wherever she was going, he would follow her. She belonged to him completely. She should never escape him now, he told himself.

She seemed to know her way, and showed no hesitation or fear when once in Tokyo, but bent her steps quickly and with assurance, until finally they were before the great terminal station at Shimbashi. They had now come a long distance. The girl looked tired; weary shadows were under her eyes, as she passed into the railway enclosure and bought a ticket for a town suburb a short distance from Tokyo.

Her husband went to the window, inquired where the girl was going, and bought a ticket for the same place.

Then began the long journey in the uncomfortable train, where there were no sleeping accommodations whatever.

Yuki found a seat, and sat very quietly staring out at the flying darkness. After a time she put her head back against the seat and, despite the jolting of the train, fell asleep.

Her husband was close to her now —in the next seat, in fact. He could have touched her, as he so longed to do, but would not for fear of disturbing or frightening her.

When they reached the little town, the banging of the doors, the blowing of whistles, and shouts of the conductors awakened her. She came to life with a start, gathered her little belongings together, and left the train, her husband still following her.

It was a refined and beautiful little town they had arrived at, apparently the home of the exclusive and cultivated Japanese. Its atmosphere was grateful and pleasing after the crowded city of Tokyo, with its endless labyrinth of narrow streets and grotesque signboards, and ceaseless noises.

Yuki had not far to walk. Only a few steps from the little station, and then she was before one of those old-fashioned, pretentious palaces once affected by the nobles. There were signs of neglect about the house and gardens, which had fallen out of repair. No coolies or servants were in sight. At the garden gate Yuki paused a moment, leaning wearily against it, ere she opened and passed through, up the garden walk, and disappeared into the shadows of the palace.

Her husband stood for a long time as though rooted to the spot. Then very slowly he retraced his steps to the railway station, bought his ticket, and returned to Tokyo. He felt sure she would come back to him.

And she did, hardly two days later. He was very gentle to her this time. There were no more questions asked, and she vouchsafed no explanation.

But she came back to him strangely docile and submissive. All the old

mockery and folly had vanished. She was angelic in her sweet tenderness and solicitude. But once he found her in tears. She protested they had come there because she had laughed so hard. Another time, when he offered her money, she refused passionately to accept it. It was the first time since she had lived with him. Thereafter she refused to take even the regular weekly allowance agreed upon. He looked in her little jewel-box, and found the money all gone.

Her docility and gentleness strengthened his confidence in her. He was sure she would never leave him again. He even told her of this belief, and she did not deny it. But her eyes were tearful. With boyish insistence he teased her.

"Tell me so—that you will never leave me again."

"Never?" she said, but the word slipped her lips as a question.

"Repeat it after me," he demanded.

"Say: 'I—shall—never—never—leave you again.'"

"Ah, you makin' fun ad me," she protested, begging the question.

But he still persisted, and made her repeat slowly after him, word by word, that she would remain with him till death should part them.

One day he found her laboriously occupied at her small writing-desk. Her little hand flew down the page, rapidly drawing the strange characters of her country's letters.

"What are you doing? You look as wise and solemn as a female Buddha."

Yuki carefully blotted and covered her letter. She did not answer him. Instead she held up her little stained fingers, to show him the ink on them. He sat down beside her, kissing the tips of her fingers.

"To whom were you writing, fairy-sage?" he said.

"To whom? My brudder."

"Your brother! Ah, you have a brother, have you? And where is he?"

She still hesitated, and he watched her keenly.

"He live ad Japan," she said, after a long moment.

"Japan is quite a big place," remarked her husband, suggestively. "He has rather large quarters for one fellow, don't you think?"

"Japan liddle bit country," she argued, trying to change the subject. "America, perhaps, grade big place, big as half the whole worl'—"

"Not quite," interposed her husband, smiling.

"Well, big's one-quarter of the worl', anyhow," she declared. "Bud Japan! Mos' liddle bit insignificant spot on all the beautiful maps."

"What part of Japan does your family live in?"

"Liddle bit town two hundled miles north of Tokyo."

"Indeed."

She had spoken the truth, he knew.

"Why doesn't your brother come to see you?"

Now that he had commenced it, he stuck to his catechism doggedly.

"He don' know where I live," she said.

"Don't know! That's strange. Why doesn't he?"

"I 'fraid tellin'."

"Afraid of what?"

"Afraid he disowning me forever."

"Why should he do that?"

He was getting interested. He disliked wringing her secrets from her in this wise. He wanted her confidence unsolicited; but his curiosity had the better of him. "Why should he disown you?" he repeated.

"Because I marrying—" she paused, somewhat piteously, holding one of his hands closely between her own small ones, and entreatingly pressing it as though begging him not to pursue his questions.

"Well?" he said — "because you married—"

"You," she finished.

"Oh!" His ejaculation was rueful. Then he laughed, and squared his shoulders, and shook his finger at her.

"What's the matter with me? Am I not good enough?"

"Too honorably good," she declared, humbly.

"Then why does your family object to receiving me into its bosom, eh?"

"Because you jus' barbarian," she said, apologetically, and then swiftly tried to make amends. "Barbarian mos' nize of all. Also *I* am liddle bit barbarian. I god them same barbarous eyes an' oogly hair—"

"Loveliest hair in the world," he said, stroking it fondly. "But never mind, dearie. Don't look so distressed. It's not your fault, of course, that your people disapprove of me."

"They don' dis'prove," she inter-

rupted him, her distress deepening. "They don' never seen you even."

"But I thought you said—"

"I jus' guess. Tha's why I don' tell thad brudder. Mebbe he dis'prove you when he see you grade big barbarian. Tha's bedder nod tell unto him."

"But where does he think you are all the time?"

"He?" She lost her head a moment. "Likewise," she continued, "he also travel from home. Perhaps he also marrying with beautiful barbarian leddy. Tha's whad I dunno."

"I don't quite understand," said her husband. "But never mind. If you don't like the subject, and it's plain you don't, you sha'n't be bothered with it."

"Thangs," she said, gratefully.

On another day, as she sat opening his American mail with her small paper-knife, a picture of a young American girl fell from the envelope. Yuki picked it up, and regarded it with dilated eyes and lips that quivered. It was the

first shock of jealousy she had experienced. One of his own countrywomen then must love him. No Japanese girl would send her picture to any man save her lover.

Her first impulse was to tear the picture across. She did not want him to see it. Perhaps even the pictured face might win him back, she thought jealously. But she did not destroy it. She hid it in the sleeve of her kimono, and for a whole week she tortured herself with drawing it forth from its hiding-place and studying the face whenever she was alone a moment, comparing it with her own exquisite one in her small mirror.

Then conscience, or perhaps natural feminine curiosity to know who her rival was, prompted her to make humble confession to her husband of her theft.

He took the matter gayly, and seemed exuberantly happy at the idea of her being jealous, for she could not well hide this fact from him. He gloated

over this apparent evidence of her love for him.

"Isn't she lovely?" he asked, enthusiastically, pointing to the picture, and then pretending to hug it to him.

"No," said Yuki, proudly. "Mos' oogly girl in all the whole worl'. Soach silliest things on her haed. I don' keer tha's hat or nod. Flowers, birds, beas', perhaps, an' rollin' her eyes this-a-way—"

"This is my sister," said Jack, gravely. "I am sorry you don't like her, Yuki. She'd be just the sort of girl to love you."

Her little spurt of temper flickered out pitifully.

"Ah, *pray* forgive me," she implored. "I mos' silliest *mousmè* in all Japan. She jus' *lovely*, mos' sweet beautiful girl in all the whole worl'. Jus' like you, my lord."

IX

THE MIKADO'S BIRTHDAY

THE mellow summer was gone. With the dawn of the autumn the languor of the country seemed to increase. Now that the weather was cooler, however, they made frequent trips to the city, visiting the chrysanthemum shows, loitering through Uyeno park, the Shiba temples, and bazaars. And one day Jack shook gayly before her eyes a really awe-inspiring document. It was, in fact, an invitation, written in fine French, from a Japanese person of high rank, inviting him to attend a very important function, which was to be given at the Hôtel Imperial on the Mikado's birthday, which function was to be

honored by the presence of "les princes et les princesses."

"We are going, of course," he told her. "It will be a change, and, besides, I want to show you off to my friends. There'll be hosts of them there, you know."

But she protested. First she set forth as excuse the fact that she was only an honorably rude and insignificant humble geisha girl, who would be out of place in so great and extraordinary an assemblage.

Then her husband quite seriously reproved her, and reminded her forcibly that she was anything but an insignificant geisha girl. She was, in fact, a very important person—his wife.

Ah, yes, she admitted that she had indeed grown in caste since her marriage with him; nevertheless, they had lived so honorably secluded together that she had forgotten all the polite mannerisms of society, which she had never been acquainted with at all,

being only a crude girl of humble parentage. She would surely disgrace not only both of them by her behavior, but doubtless the whole assemblage. She would not know how to act, how to look, and when to speak.

Then Jack insisted, with affected selfishness, that she should look at and speak to no one but himself. He would commit hari-kari, or joshi, or any old kind of Japanese suicide, otherwise. And as for her manners, they were lovely, perfect, just right.

"Ah, bud you—" she deprecated. "You don' understan', you big barbarian. Those same honorable monsters, Japanese princes, whad, before all the gods, they goin' to thing of me?"

"That you are absolutely adorable. How could they help thinking so, unless they are stone blind. Besides, this isn't a Japanese affair at all. It's at a European hotel, and there'll be all sorts and conditions of people there.

I was lucky to get the invitations. They aren't for every one, you know. This is a big thing."

"*You* so big," she said, proudly.

"Well, no. It had really nothing to do with my size. You see, I have a half-Jap friend in America, and of course it's through him I'm favored."

"Ah, thad half-Jap, he was very high-up man ad Japan, perhaps?"

"Well, he was connected with some of the big families, though he was quite poor."

"Thad," said Yuki, with sudden vehemence, "is no madder ad Japan. Money! Who has thad money? Nod the ole families, the flower of the country; jus' the shop-keepers and the politicians."

Her husband was startled at her outbreak. He was astonished at her knowledge of existing conditions in her country. But she did not pursue the subject, saying she disliked it.

And the ball? What about that?

Well, she would not go with him. He must go to that all alone, for the million big reasons she had given him. Moreover, all the ladies would wear Parisian toilettes. It would be a disgrace for his wife to go in a kimono.

Again he was astonished at her. How did she know that on such occasions the ladies, Japanese included, dressed in European gowns?

Apparently she knew more concerning such matters than he had imagined. It was becoming plainer to him every day that his wife was of no ordinary family. And then the memory of the old rambling palace, doubtless her home, in the exquisite, aristocratic little town where he had followed her, supported this idea. Who was his wife, after all? Who were her people, and why had none of them come near her during all these months? What was the meaning of the mystery in which she had surrounded herself ever since he had known her. And now, when there

was scarcely a doubt left in his mind of her love for him, why had he failed to win her confidence?

"I want to know just who you are, my little wife," he suddenly said. "I do not believe that tale about your people. I know you are not a geisha girl. You are not, are you?"

"No," she said, very softly.

"Then tell me. Who are your people? It is only right I should know this."

She looked up at him with intense seriousness. Then her eyes fluttered, and she went rambling into one of her fairy tales of nonsense.

"My people? Who they are? My august ancestors came from the moon. My one hundled grade-grandfathers fight and fight and fight like the lion, and conquer one-half of all Japan—fight the shogun, fight the kazoku, fight each other. They were great Samourai, cutting off the haeds of aevery humble mans they don' like. So much blood-

shed displeased the gods. They punishing all my ancestors, bringin' them down to thad same poverty of those honorable peebles killed by them. Then much distress an' sadness come forever ad our house. All pride, all haughty boasting daed forever. Aeverybody goin' 'bout weepin' like ad a funeral. Nobody habby. What they goin' do git bag thad power an' reeches ag'in? Also one ancestor have grade big family to keep from starving, an' one daughter beautiful as the moon of her ancestors. He weep more than all the rest of those ancestors, weep an' weep till he go blind like an owl ad day-time. Then the gods begin feel sawry. One of them mos' sawry of all. He also is descendant of the Sun. Well, thad sun-god he comin' down ad Japan, make big raddle an' noise, an' marrying with thad same beautifullest daughter of thad ole blind ancestor. Thad sun-god my fadder. Me? I am the half-moon-half-sun offspring."

She had promised to accompany him, at all events, to see the review from the American-legation tent, but at the last moment she backed out. She had seen it many times before, she declared. She was tired of it.

At first he swore he would not go without her. Why, the "show," he declared, would be nothing to him without her to see it with him. Half the pleasure—nay, all of it—would be gone. He was really keenly disappointed, but she coaxed and wheedled and petted around him, till, before he knew that he was aggrieved at her backsliding, he was well on his way.

The streets were thronged with a motley crowd of people. Jinrikishas were scurrying hither and thither, and little bits of humanity, in the shape of small men, small women, small children, and small dogs and cats, were colliding and jostling against the many ramshackle vehicles in the road. Gay flags and bunting were displayed every-

where, and the town presented a gala appearance.

Jack got out of his jinrikisha and pushed his way through the crowd until he came up to the parade-grounds. He found his way to the proper tent, and, with a half-score of former acquaintances about him, he was soon drawn into the babble and gush of small talk and jokes that tourists meeting each other in foreign lands usually indulge in.

Once on the parade-grounds, where infantry, cavalry, and artillery were forming themselves, it seemed as if he had suddenly left Japan altogether, and was once more in the modern Western world, of which he had always been a part.

There was nothing Oriental in this brave display of the imperial army. There was nothing Oriental in this bustling, noisy crowd of foreigners, each trying to outdo the other in importance and precedence. Only the

skies and the little winds, and, in the distance, the sinuous outlines of the mountains and forests beyond, and the disks on the national flag displayed everywhere, were Japanese. And after his long seclusion in the country the glitter dazzled him.

There were seven thousand men in the field, and the Mikado, surrounded by his generals, body-guard, outriders, and standard-bearers, reviewed the troops; and then, amid a great flourish, and hoarse cheering drowning the national hymn, which was being played by all the bands at once, he left the grounds.

Jack did not return after the parade to his home, much as he would have liked to do so. Some acquaintances who had crossed on the same steamer with him on his way to Japan carried him off triumphantly to their hotel, and that night he went with them to the imperial ball.

It was very late when he went home

to Yuki. There was a faint light burning in the zashishi, and he wondered with some concern whether she were sitting up waiting for him. He did not see her at first when he entered the room, for the light of the andon had fluttered down dimly, and it was more the grayness of the approaching dawn which saved the room from complete darkness. Crossing the room, he came upon her. She had fallen asleep on the floor. She was lying on her back, her arms encircling her head. He was suddenly struck with her extreme youth. She seemed little more than a tired child, who had grown weary and had fallen asleep among her toys, for beside her on a tiny foot-high table was the little supper she had prepared for him, and which was now quite cold. On the other side of her were her tiny drum and samisen, with which she had been attempting doubtless to pass the evening by pulling from the strings some of that weird music he knew so well now.

For a long time her husband looked at her, and a feeling of intense isolation about her came over and suddenly possessed him. Why had he never been able to bridge that strange distance which lay like a pall between them, the feeling always that she was not wholly his own, that she had been but a guest within his house, a tiny wild bird that he had caught in some strange way and caged—caught, though she had come to him, as it were, for protection? Just as, when a boy, he remembered how a robin had beaten at his shutters, and he had saved it from an enemy, and afterwards how he had caged it, and how it had pined for its freedom.

The thought that he might yet lose Yuki caused him such anguish of mind it almost stunned him. He knelt down beside her, and drew her up in his arms, and then, as gently as a mother would have done, he carried her up the queer spiral stairway which led to their little up-stairs room.

The next day she questioned him anxiously. Were there many ladies more beautiful than she at the ball? Had he enjoyed himself largely with them, and how could he live away hereafter from such mirth and gayety? Why had he come back to little, insignificant her?

And he told her that never in all his life before had he longed so ardently for any one as he had for her that previous night. That the day had been endless; the noise and show, the brassy merriment and cheer, were abhorrent to him, for she had not been there to rob it of its vulgarity with the charm of her sweet presence. That he had been rude in his efforts to escape it, had bullied the jinrikimen because they had seemed to creep, and that happiness and peace had only come back to him again when he had crossed his own threshold and had taken her in his arms.

Still the wistful distress in her misty eyes was only in part dispelled.

"Last night," she said, "I broke my liddle jade bracelet. It is a bad omen."

"I will buy you a dozen new ones," he said.

"One million dozens cannot mend jus' thad liddle one," she returned, sadly, shaking her head. "It is a bad omen. Mebbe a warning from the gods."

Of what did they warn her? That she could not say, but she had heard that such an accident usually preceded the sorrows of love. Perhaps he would soon pass away from her, and, like the ghost of the fisher-boy Urashima, who had left his fairy bride to return to his people, he too would pass out of her life, back into that from which he had come.

X

A BAD OMEN

It was late in November. The parks were dropping their autumn glories and taking on the browner hues and hints of hoar-frost, black-and-white vestments, the sackcloth and ashes of winter. The recessional of the birds was dying away into silence. Soon the final, long-drawn amen of the north-wind would be breathed out over the deserted woods, where the anthem of praise had rung out to the worshipping air all through the golden days and silver nights of summer.

The still beauty of the autumn evening was piercingly melancholy, and, even with a loving sunset still lingering in the skies, a silken, gentle rain was

falling, as though the gods were weeping over the death of the autumn, were weeping hopeless tears—the most tragic of all.

The little house that stood alone on the hill faced to the west, its wet roofs and shingles sparkling and glistening in the rays of the dying sunset that enveloped it.

Yuki opened a shoji (sliding paper door) of her chamber, and looked out wistfully at the city of Tokyo, that in the autumn silence was shining out like a gem, with its many strange lights and colors. She stole softly out on to a small balony, and stepped down into the tiny garden as the night began to spread its mantle of darkness. A few minutes later her husband called to her:

"Yuki! Yuki!"

He drew her into the room, and closed the shoji behind her.

"You have been crying again!" he said, sharply, and turned her face up to the light.

"It is the rain on my face, my lord," she answered in the smallest voice.

"But you mustn't go out in the rain. You are quite wet, dear."

"Soach a little, gentle rain," she said. "It will not hurt jus' me. I loog-in' aeverywhere 'bout for our liddle bit poor nightingale. Gone! Perhaps daed! Aeverything dies—bird, flowers, mebbe—me!"

He put his hand over her mouth with a hurt exclamation.

"Don't!" he only said.

The maid brought in their supper on a tray, but before she could set it down Yuki had impetuously crossed the room and taken it from her hands.

"Go, go, honorable maid," she said. "I will with my own hands attend my lord's honorable appetite."

She knelt at his feet, geisha fashion, holding the tray and waiting for him to eat, but he took it from her gravely, and put it on the small table beside them, and then silently, tender-

ly, he took her small hands in his own.

"What is troubling you, Yuki? You must tell me. You are hiding something from me. What has become of my little mocking-bird? I cannot live without it."

"You also los' liddle bird?" she queried, softly—"jus' lige unto my same liddle nightingale?"

"I have lost—I am losing you," he said, suddenly, with a burst of anguish. "I cannot make you out these last few weeks. What has come over you? I miss your laughing and your singing. You are always sad now; your eyes—ah, I cannot bear it." His voice went suddenly anxious. "Tell me, is it—do you—want—need some more money, Yuki? You know you can have all you want."

She sprang to her feet fiercely.

"No, no, no, no!" she cried; "naever any more for all my life long, *dear* my lord."

"Then why—"

"Ah, *pray* don' ask why."

"But why—"

"Then listen unto me. I nod any longer thad liddle bit geisha girl you marrying with. I change grade big moach. Now you see me, I am one wooman, mebbe like wooman one hundled years ole — wise — sad — I change!"

"Yes," he said. "You are changed. You are my Undine, and I have found your soul at last!"

One oppressive afternoon, when a nagging, bleating wind out-doors had prevented their going on their customary ramble through the woods or on a little trip to the city, Jack had fallen asleep. Long before he had awakened he had felt her warm, soothing presence near him, but with the pleasure it afforded him was mingled a premonition of disaster and a dread of something unhappy about her? He awoke to find

her standing by him, her face white and drawn with a despair he could not comprehend.

"What is it?" He started up fearfully. "Your eyes are tragic! You look as if you were contemplating something frightful."

She sank down to his feet, and, despite his protests, knelt and clung to him there, sobbing with passionate abandon.

"Don't! Don't! I can't bear you to do that. What is it, Yuki?"

"Oh, for liddle while, jus' liddle bit while, bear with me," she said.

"Little while! What do you mean?" he demanded.

She tried to regain her composure. Her laughter was piteous.

"I only liddle bit skeered," she said. "I—" she stammered—"I skeered 'bout thad liddle foolish jade bracelet, all smashed and broken."

"Is that all?"

"It is soach a bad omen! The gods trying to separate us, mebbe."

"Separate us?" His suspicions were growing. "How can they do that? It lies between you and me, such a—such a fate. The gods—ah, you are talking nonsense."

"The gods see inside," she said.

"Inside what?"

"Our hearts." Her voice was barely above a whisper.

"And what can they find there to distress you?" he asked, almost fiercely. She was hurting him with her failure to confide in him.

"The bracelet—" she began. "It is broken, an' love, too, mus' die—an' break!"

From that day her melancholy grew rather than diminished. But she had roused her husband's suspicions, and her morbidness irritated rather than appealed to him. He felt that in some way he was being deceived. The day that he found her wardrobe neatly and carefully folded away in her queer little packing-case, as though in preparation

for a journey, the full sense of her deceit dawned upon him. Hitherto when she had left him she had taken none of her belongings with her. He perceived it was now her intention to desert him utterly. He had served her purpose, apparently, and she was through with him.

His wrath burst its bounds. He had not known the capabilities of his angry passion. He tore the silken garments from the box with the fierce madness of one demented, then he pushed her into the room, and showed her where they lay scattered.

"The meaning of this?" he demanded, white to the lips with the intensity of his passion.

She remained mute. She did not even trouble to mock or laugh at him, nor would she weep. She seemed dazed and bewildered, and he, infuriated against her, said things which rankled in his conscience for years afterwards.

"Does a promise mean nothing to you—a promise—an oath itself? Were you, parrot-like, merely echoing my words when you swore to stay by me until—" his voice broke—"death?"

Still she made him no denial, and her silence maddened him, and drove him on with his bitter arraignment.

"What your object has been I fail to see, but you cannot deny that you have laid yourself out, have used every effort, every art and wile, of which you are mistress, to make me believe in you. And I—I—like a blind, deluded fool—ah, Yuki—there is something wrong, some hideous mistake somewhere. You have some secret, some trouble. Be frank with me. Can't you see—understand how I—I am suffering?"

She roused herself with an effort, but her words were pitifully conventional. She apologized for the trouble and noise she had brought into his house.

"You have not answered me!" he cried. "What was your intention? Did

you intend to leave me? You shall answer me that!"

"It was bedder so," she said, and her voice fainted. She could speak no further.

"Then such was your intention!" He could hardly believe her words.

XI

THE NIGHTINGALE

WHEN Love lives after Trust is dead, then peace is an unknown quantity. A constraint that was baffling in its intense hopelessness now hedged up between these two. Yuki grew thin and wistful. Her whole attitude became one of pitiful attempted conciliation and humility, which with bitter suspicion her husband took to be confusion and guilt. Had she even affected somewhat of her old light-heartedness and attempted to win his forgiveness by her old audacious wiles, her husband would have forgotten and forgiven everything, glad of an excuse to renew the old close comradeship with her. But she made no such attempt.

She had acquired a peculiar fear of her husband, and unconsciously shrank from him, as though dreading to bring down on herself his further displeasure. She kept away from him as much as she could, though at times she made spasmodic, frantic efforts to assume her old light-heartedness, but these efforts were usually followed by passionate outbursts of tears, when she had drawn the shoji between them, and was once more alone with her own inward thoughts, whatever they were.

Meanwhile her husband kept the watch of a jailer over her. He was convinced that she was waiting for a chance to leave him, and this he was determined to frustrate. She had raised in him a feeling of the intensest bitterness, which amounted almost to antagonism towards her. And still beneath all this resentment and bitterness a tenderness and yearning for her threatened to strangle and overpower all other feeling. Her apparent fear of him

hurt him terribly, and caused him distractedly at times to question whether he had been as kind to her as he might have been. Then his mind would inevitably revert to the fact that she was planning to leave him, and his resentment would burn fiercer than ever.

By a common dread of the subject, both of them avoided alluding to it, and for this reason it weighed the heavier on their minds. He feared that any explanation she might attempt to make to him would only be some excuse put forward to reconcile him, and win his consent to the impossible situation which he instinctively knew she intended to consummate. She, on the other hand, watched wildly to turn the subject, dreading his wrath, which she was conscious was righteous.

To add to the gloom of their strained relations, a season of drizzly wet weather set in, which confined them to the house, and moreover Yuki was grieving and pining over the loss of a favorite night-

ingale that had made its home in the tall bamboo out in the midnight garden of their little home. Jack was misanthropic and cynical, restless as it is possible for a man to be under such galling circumstances, yearning nevertheless for things to be as they had been between him and his wife.

One night, at dusk, after an exceptionally sad and chilly meal in-doors, Jack had come out alone, and was trying to soothe his senses with a fragrant cigar. Instinctively he was waiting for his wife. He missed her if she was absent from his side but a moment. Suddenly out of the gloaming soared out one long, thrilling note of sheer ecstasy and bliss, that quivered and quavered a moment, and then floated away into the maddest peals of melody, ending in a sob that was excruciating in its intense humanness. The nightingale had returned!

He sprang to his feet, and, trembling by the veranda rail, stared outward



THE NIGHTINGALE SONG

into the darkness. And then? Yuki came out from the shadows of their garden, and under the light of the moon, beneath their small balcony, she looked up into his eyes, and murmured in a voice thrilled by an inward sob, so timid and meek, so beseeching and prayerful:

"I lige please you, my lord!"

"The nightingale!" he whispered, with hoarse emotion. "Did you hear it? It has returned!"

"Nay, my lord—tha's jus' me! I jus' a liddle echo!"

She had learned the voice of the nightingale.

With an exclamation of indescribable tenderness he drew her into his arms, and for a few moments at least all the misery and pain and constraint of the last few weeks between them passed away and gave place to all their pent-up love and loneliness.

As he held her close to him, he was

conscious at first only of the fact that she loved him, that she was clinging to him with somewhat of her old abandon, and then he felt her hands upon his arms. He could almost see them shaking and trembling. She was attempting to release herself! Struggling to be free! All of a sudden he released her, and stood breathing hard, his arms folded across his breast, waiting for her to do or say something to him.

She did not move. She stood before him, with her head down; and then her blue eyes lifted, and timidly, appealingly, they beseeched his own. She started to speak, stammered only a few incoherent words, and then, with a half-sob, she unsteadily crossed the room and left him alone.

Two days later, upon their household gloom came word from Taro Burton, announcing that he had arrived in Tokyo. Jack rushed off to meet him, telling Yuki he expected an old friend, and would bring him home that evening.

XII

TARO BURTON

IT may be that Jack Bigelow first awoke to the fact that for months he had been literally living in a dream-world when he saw his old college-chum, Taro Burton—the same dear, old, grave Taro! He rushed up to him in the old boyish fashion, wringing his hands with unaffected delight.

The past dream-months rolled for the moment from his memory, and Jack was once again the happy up-to-date American boy.

Taro had been delayed in America, he now told the other frankly, on account of the failure of his people to send him passage money until about a month ago. He had a few hardships to

recount and some messages to deliver from mutual friends, and then he wanted to know all about Jack. Why had he failed to visit his people as promised? How much of the country had he seen? Why were his letters so few and far between?

Jack Bigelow laughed shortly. "Burton, old man," he said, "I've been dead to everything in Japan—in the world, in fact—save one entrancing subject."

"Yes?" The other was curious. "And that is—?"

"My wife."

"Your wife!" Taro stopped short. They were crossing the main street of Tokyo on foot.

"Yes," said the other, laughing boyishly, all his resentment against the girl lost and forgiven for the time being.

"And so you did it, after all?" said the other, with slow, bitter emphasis. His friend, then, was little different

from other foreigners who marry only to desert.

"Did what?"

"Got a wife."

"Got a wife! Why, man, she came to me. She's a witch, the sun-goddess herself. She's had me under her spell all these months. She has hypnotized me."

"And still has you under her spell?"

"I am wider awake to-day," said Jack, soberly.

"And soon," said Taro, "you will be still wider awake, and then—then it will be time for her to awaken."

"No!" said Jack, sharply, with bitter memory. "She has no heart whatever. She likes to pretend—that is all."

"How do you mean?"

"Simply that we've both been pretending and acting—I to myself, she to me; she trying to make me believe it was all real to her, at any rate these last two months; I trying to delude my-

self into believing in her, which was more than my conceit was good for, after all. Just when I was sure of her, I accidentally discovered that she was preparing to desert me altogether."

"She apparently has more sense than some of them," said Taro. "Her head rules her heart."

"Oh, entirely," Jack agreed, quickly, thinking of the money she had coaxed from him in the past.

"And you," Taro turned on him, "have you come out all right?"

"Perfectly!" the other laughed with forced assurance and airiness that deceived Taro, who was somewhat credulous by nature. "It wasn't for a lifetime, you know," he added.

His reply was distasteful to the high moral sense of Taro Burton—more, it pained him, for it brought to him a sudden and deep disappointment in his friend. He changed the subject, and tried to talk about his own people. He was in a great hurry to go home, and

would linger but a day in Tokyo. He had arrived sooner than they expected him. He was hungry for a sight of his little sister and mother—they were all he had in the world.

Jack's spirits were dampened for the moment, as he had expected his friend to remain with him for a few days. However, he got Taro's consent to accompany him to his home for dinner that evening, in order to meet the "Sun-goddess."

Taro was ushered with great ceremony into the quaint zashishi, which was supposed to be entirely Japanese, and was in reality wholly American, despite the screens and mats and vases. Jack ran up-stairs to prepare his wife to meet his friend.

The girl was panically dressing in her best clothes. The maid had brushed her hair till it glistened. Long ago her husband had peremptorily forbidden her the use of oil for the purpose

of darkening or smoothing it, so it now shone a rich bronze black and curled entrancingly around her little ears and neck. She needed no color for her lips or cheeks; this also her husband had forbidden her to use. She looked like the picture of the sun-goddess in some old fairy print, her eyes dancing and shining with excitement, her cheeks very red and rosy. She was irresistible, thought her husband, as he held her at arm's length. Then, to her great mortification and chagrin, he lifted her bodily in his arms and carried her downstairs. And thus they entered the room, the girl blushing and struggling in his arms.

Taro Burton was standing tall and erect, his back to the light. He was very grave, in spite of his friend's mirth, and, as Jack set the girl on the floor, he took a step forward to meet her, bowing ceremoniously in Japanese fashion.

Yuki stood up, straightened her

crumpled gown, and hung her head a moment.

"Yuki, this is my friend, Mr. Burton."

She raised her head with a quick, terrified start, and then instantaneously hers and Taro's eyes met, and each recoiled and shrank backward, their eyes matching each other in the intense startled look of horror.

The man's face had taken on the color of death, and he was standing, immovable and silent, almost as if he were an image of stone. The girl sank to the floor in a confused heap, shivering and sobbing.

Jack turned from her to Taro, and then back again to the crouching girl. She was creeping on her knees towards Taro, but the man, having found the power of movement, went backward away from her, aged all in a moment.

He tried to turn his sick eyes from her, but they clung, fascinated as is the needle by the pole.

And then Jack's voice, hoarse with a fear he could not understand, broke in:

"Burton, what is the matter?"

Suddenly the girl sprang to her feet and rushed to Taro, sobbing and entreating in Japanese, but the terrible figure of the man remained immovable. Jack pulled her forcibly from him.

"Burton, dear old friend, what is it?"

The other pushed his hands from him with almost a blow.

"She is my sister! Oh, my God!"

Jack Bigelow felt for an instant as if the life within him had been stopped. Then he grasped at a chair and sank down dazed.

As though to break up the terrible silence, the girl commenced to laugh, but her laughter was terrible, almost unearthly. The man in the chair covered his face with his hands; the other made a movement towards her as if he would strike her. But she did not retreat: nay, she leaned towards him. And her laughter, loud and discordant,

sank low, and then faded in a tremulous sob.

She put out her little speaking, beseeching hands, and "Sayonara!" she whispered softly. Then there was stillness in the room, though the echoes seemed to repeat "Sayonara," "Sayonara," and again "Sayonara," and that means not merely "Farewell," but the heart's resignation: "If it must be."

Jack and Taro were alone together, neither breaking by a word the tragic sadness of that terrible silence. It was the coming into the room of the maid that recalled them to life. Twilight was settling. She brought the lighted andon and set it in the darkening room.

Jack got up slowly. The stupor and horror of it all were not gone from him, but he crossed to the other man, and looked into his dull, ashen face.

"My God! Burton, forgive me," he said, brokenly; "I am a gentleman. I will fix it all right. She is my wife,

and all the world to me. We can remarry if you wish, and I swear to protect her with all the love and homage I would give to any woman who became my wife."

"Yes, you must do that," said the other, with weak half-comprehension. "But where is she?"

"Where is she?" Jack repeated, dazedly. They had forgotten her departure. A dread of her possible loss possessed and stupefied Jack, and Taro was half delirious.

"We must look for her at once," said Jack.

They called to her, and all over the house and through the grounds they searched for her, their lanterns scanning the dark shadows under the trees in the little garden; but only the autumn winds, sighing in the pine-trees, echoed her singing minor notes, and mocked and numbed their senses.

"She must have gone home," said the husband.

"We must go there at once," said the brother.

"It will be all right, Burton, dear old friend. Trust me; you know me well enough for that."

Taro paused, and turned on him burning eyes, in which friendliness had been replaced by a look that spoke of stern and awful judgment. "Otherwise," he began, but paused; then he went on in a cold hard voice, "I was going to say, I will kill you."

XIII

IN WHICH TWO MEN LEARN OF A SISTER'S SACRIFICE

JACK BIGELOW'S usually sunny face was bleached to the ashiness of fear and despair. He was so nervous that he could not keep still a moment at a time, but would get up and pace the length of the car, only to return and look with eyes that attested the heartache within at the other man, silent and grim. Taro seemed the calmer, but well the younger man knew that beneath that subdued exterior slumbered a fire that needed but a breath to be turned into avenging fury.

At last they reached their destination. The little town once again!

But this night Jack was not alone. There was no star or moon overhead to lighten their pathway; a dull, drizzly, sleety rain was falling. In silence they left the car; in silence plodded through the mud of the road and the damp grass of the field beyond. The little garden gate creaked on its hinges as they went through. They saw the dim outlines of the old palace before them, with its wide balconies and sloping roofs. Half-way up the garden was the family pond, freshened by a hidden spring, and the little winding brook which wound hither and thither showed how it emptied into the bay beyond. There was even a tiny boat moored on a toy-like island in the centre of the pond.

For the first time Taro Burton paused, and looked with dreadful eyes at its dull surface, which even the darkness of the night and the miserable rain could not obliterate entirely. What were the memories that crowded back on him,

suffocating him? Here it was that he and Yuki had grown up together. The little boat was the same, the island as small and neat, the house seemed as ever; nothing had changed. Yes, there was Yuki! A deep groan slipped from his lips.

There was a difference of seven years in their ages, but a stronger bond of sympathy and comradeship had existed between these two than is usual between brother and sister. Their nationality had to a large extent isolated them from other children, for the Japanese children had laughed at their hair and eyes, and called them "Kirishitans" (Christians). Until he was seven years of age, Taro had manfully, though bitterly, fought his battles alone. He had been a queer, brooding little lad, of passionate and violent temper, and, apparently, scorning any overtures of friendship from any one outside his own household.

When the little sister had come, the

boy had gone suddenly wild with joy, and had proceeded to bestow upon her the same worshipful love his mother gave exclusively to him, for Snowflake had been born when their English father lay at the gates of death, her tiny soul fluttering into life just as that of her father drifted outward into eternity, so that to Omatsu, the mother, who was passionately absorbed in her grief, her arrival had been a source of irritation. But Taro had carried her to the family temple, and had, himself, named her "Snowflake" (Yuki), for she had come at a time when all the land was covered with whiteness. There had been a frost and even a snowfall, which is rare in that part of the country. Moreover, she resembled a snowflake, so soft and white and pure.

How was it possible for him, after all these years, to come, as he now had come, once more to this place of which she had always been a part, and with

which she had always been lovingly associated in his mind, and not be filled with emotions that rent his heart. She had been his inspiration and all the world to him.

He remembered how they would drift around in their tiny boat, and she, little autocrat, would perch before him, her eyes dancing and shining, while he told her the story of the fisher-boy Urashima and his bride, the daughter of the dragon king. And when he would finish, for the hundredth time, perhaps, she would say, "See, Taro-sama, I am the princess, and you the fisher-boy. We are sailing, sailing, sailing on the sea 'where Summer never dies,'" and he, to please her fancy, drifted on and on with her, around and around the little pond, until the sun began to sink in the west and the little mother would call them in-doors.

Now the monotonous drip, drip, drip of the rain-drops as they plashed from

the weeping willow-trees that surrounded the tiny lake, fell upon its dull surface with mournful sound. Taro groaned again.

When he had knocked loudly a man came shuffling round from the rear of the house, and, in reply to his inquiry for Madam Omatsu, informed him gruffly that she had retired.

It did not matter; he must awaken her, Taro, who had found voice, told him with such insistence that the servant fled ignominiously to obey him. They waited for some time, out in the melancholy night. There was no sound from within the house. Taro hammered on the door once more. Then a faint light appeared from a window close by the door, and the man's head showed again. He begged their honorable patience. He would open in a fraction of a second. He was very humble and servile now, and, as he admitted them, backed before them, bowing and bobbing at every step, for his

mistress's entire household had been taught to treat foreigners with the greatest deference and respect.

"Go to your mistress," said Taro, briefly, "and tell her that her son desires to see her at once."

There was immediately a fluttering at the other side of the shoji. Taro saw an eye withdraw from a hole. There were a few minutes of silence, and then the shoji parted and a woman entered the room. Her mother-love must have prompted her to rush into the arms of her son, for she had not seen him in five years, but, whatever her emotions, she skilfully concealed them, for the paltry reason that her son was accompanied by a stranger, an honorable foreign friend, and it behooved her to affect the finest manners. Consequently she prostrated herself gracefully, bowing and bowing, until Taro strode rapidly over to her and lifted her to her feet.

She was quite pretty and very gentle

and graceful. Her face, oval in contour, was smooth and unwrinkled as a girl's, for Japanese women age slowly. It was hard to believe she was the mother of the tall man now holding her at arm's length and looking down at her with such deep, questioning eyes.

"Where is my sister, Yuki?" he demanded, hoarsely.

"Yuki?" Madam Omatsu smiled with saintly confidence. She had retired. Would they pray wait till morning? Ah, how was her honorable son, her august offspring? She began fondling her boy now, stroking his face, standing on tiptoe to kiss it, ecstatically smoothing and caressing his hands, feeling his strange clothes, and laughing joyously at their likeness to those of her dead husband's. But the dark shadow on Taro's face was deepening, nor would he return or submit to his mother's caresses till his fears regarding his sister were stilled.

"Send for her," he said, briefly, and she knew he would not be gainsaid.

Send for her! Ah, Madam Omatsu begged her noble son's pardon ten million times, but she had made a great mistake. His sister had, of course, retired, but it was not within their augustly miserable and honorably unworthy domicile. She had gone out on a visit to some friends.

Taro undid the clinging hands and pushed her from him, his brooding eyes glaring.

"Where?"

Where? Why, it was only a short distance — perhaps two rice-fields' lengths from their house.

"The house?—the people's name?"

Madam Omatsu whitened a trifle. Her eyes narrowed, her lips quivered. She tried once more frantically to prevaricate.

The people's name? She could not quite recall, but the next day—the next day surely—

"Ah-h," said her son, with delirious brutality, "you are deceiving me, lying to me. I demand to know where she is. I am her rightful guardian. I must see her at once."

Madam Omatsu protested with faint vehemence, but she did not weep. She even essayed a little laugh, that reminded Jack eerily of Yuki. In the dimly lighted room she looked strangely like her daughter, save that she was much smaller and quite thin and frail, whereas Yuki was rosy and healthy.

Taro was speaking to her in Japanese, in a sharp, cruel voice, and she was answering gently, meekly, humbly, consolingly. Jack felt sorry for her. Suddenly Taro threw her hands from him, with a gesture of sheer despair and exhausted patience.

"I can learn nothing from her, nothing," he said in English. Then he turned on her again. "Listen," he said: "You are my mother, and as such I honor you, but you must not

deceive me. I know all; know that my sister was married to an American; know how she was married, if you call such marriage. They do not consider it so, as you must know. What do you know of this, my mother? It could not have happened without your knowledge?"

The mother broke down at last. All was indeed lost if he knew that much. She sank in a heap at his feet, and again the other man was reminded of her daughter.

Taro raised her, not ungently, curbing his emotions.

"Pray speak to me the truth," he implored.

"It was for you," she said, faintly, in Japanese. "I desired it, I, your mother; and, afterwards, she also, she, your sister. It was a small sacrifice, my son."

"Sacrifice! What do you mean?" he cried.

"Alas, we had not the money to keep

you at the American school, and later, when you desired to return, it was still harder."

"Oh, my God!"

She went on, speaking brokenly in Japanese. After he had gone to America their little fortune had been swept away, but of this they had kept him in ignorance, fearing that he would not remain in the university did he know how poor they had become. The house belonged to him; they could not sell it. There had been but poor crops in their few remaining acres of rice-fields; their income became smaller and smaller. One by one their servants and coolies had to be sacrificed, till there were only a very few left, and these refused to be paid for their services. They had secured money in what manner they could, and sent it to him. It was hard, but they loved him.

Then Yuki, unknown to her mother, had gone up to Tokyo each day and learned the arts of the geisha; later

she invented dances and songs of her own, and soon she was able to command a good price at one of the chief tea-gardens in Tokyo.

This for a season had brought them in a fair income, and for a time they were enabled to send him even more than the usual allowance. Then came his request for his passage money. Alas! they were but weak and silly women. They had forgotten to save against this event in their desire to keep him in comfort. Nakodas had approached Yuki, and tempting offers were made to her. She had resisted all of them, for she was then below the age when girls usually marry, but sixteen years of age. Only when it became imperative to raise the passage money would she even listen to the pursuasion of her mother and of the nakoda. They had pointed out to her the great advantage, and finally, as the brother's letters grew more insistent, she had broken down and given in.

After that time she had assisted them in their efforts to secure her a suitable husband. They had been exceptionally successful, for she had married a foreigner who would likely leave her soon, which was fortunate in Omatsu's mind, one whose excellent virtues and whose wealth were above question. This was all there was to tell. She prayed and besought her honorable son's pardon.

During her recital Taro had leaned towards her, listening with bated breath to every word that escaped her lips. His thin, nervous face was horribly drawn, his hands were clinched tightly at his side, his whole form was quivering. He tried to regain his scattered senses, and his hand vaguely wandered to his brow, pushing back the thick black hair that had fallen over it.

"You cannot understand," he said to the other man, his voice scarcely recognizable for its labor. "It was for me, me, my little sister sold herself. To keep me in comfort and ease!

Snowflake for me! And they kept me in ignorance. I did not even dream they were in straitened circumstances. Oh, had I not willing hands and an eager heart to work, to slave for them? Why should the whole burden have fallen on her, my little, frail sister? But it has always been so. There is no such thing as justice in this land for the woman."

Jack heard him raving, understood, and bowed his head in impotent sorrow.

"Has your mother given you any information of her whereabouts?" he suddenly broke in.

Taro had forgotten that they were seeking her. His mother's story had held all his attention. The horror aroused by that recital of devotion, the thought of the months of her sweet life which she had sacrificed for him, and then how he had repulsed her, pressed on his poor numbed senses. But Jack's inquiry recalled him. A thou-

sand dark surmises regarding her overwhelmed him.

"Yes, yes—where is she?" he asked, huskily.

She had been with her husband some days now. Madam Omatsu expected her home soon, and this time she would never again return to him.

Taro's eyes were inflamed. "And she has not returned? She should be here now! Ah, it is plain to be seen what has happened. She may be taking her life at this moment. It is what a Japanese girl would do. She had the blood of heroes in her veins; she would not falter."

All of a sudden he turned upon his friend. Then the full agony caused by his sister's disappearance and her great sacrifice descended upon him, and he tottered. Before Jack could stay him, he swayed forward and, as he fell, struck his forehead upon the corner of a heavy chair that had been his father's. When Jack raised the head of the un-

conscious man he found blood flowing from a wide cut over the left eye.

There were hurrying feet throughout the house, terrified whispers, and sobs, and, above all, a mother's voice raised in terrible anguish.

XIV

A STRUGGLE IN THE NIGHT

By day and night they kept their unrelaxing watch by the bedside of the sick man. Ever he tossed and turned and muttered and cried aloud, one word alone on his lips—his sister's name.

Tenderly the mother smoothed the fevered brow, softly she stroked the restless hands, and tried to still their fever between her own cool, soothing ones. Thin lines had traced their shadows on her worn face; gray threads had come to mingle with the glossy black of her hair. But she never permitted herself, after that first night of anguish, to betray her emotions, for, if she did, well she knew she would be re-

fused the precious labor of nursing her boy. And she kept her sleepless, tireless watch night and day. Her maid begged her to lie down herself and rest, but she shook her head with bright, dry eyes. Rest for her? While he lay tossing thus? Nay! perhaps when he should find the rest, the gods would permit her also a respite; till then she must keep her watch.

She smiled pathetically when the white-faced American boy tried to insist that she should sleep, with the little air of authority he had assumed in the household. But with the gentle smile she also shook her head in negation.

"Let me take your place," he pleaded. "He is dear to me also."

Still she smiled, such a shadowy, heart-aching smile, and turned back to the sick-bed.

Jack Bigelow went back to Tokyo, and began his vigilant search for the missing girl. The services of the en-

tire metropolitan police board were called forth, and money was not spared. The nakoda who had brought about their marriage was put through a vigorous catechism, but he could tell them nothing. The proprietor of the tea-garden swore she had not returned to him, and when he bewailed the misfortune which was filling his house and gardens with officers, Jack consoled him by paying liberally for the loss he claimed he was suffering.

On the fifth day the mystery of the girl's disappearance still remained unsolved. Large rewards were offered for a clew to her whereabouts. The police were sure that she was somewhere in Tokyo, and Jack urged them to continue unremitting search in the city, but each night dawned upon their fruitless efforts. Now some one had seen a girl of her description entering a tea-house on the eve of her disappearance; another had seen her selling flowers in the market-place; and yet

another swore she had gone on board a German vessel with a dried-up foreigner. This last person could not be mistaken—a Japanese girl with blue eyes and red hair. But each clew was found wanting and proved false.

Then back to Yuki's home, sick-hearted, disappointed, weary, went Jack Bigelow. A servant met him with the blessed news that the man down with brain fever was improving; that a merciful calm had at last come to him, and that now he slept. Wearied from his fruitless endeavors to find some clew to Yuki's whereabouts, the first good news in days unnerved the young man. He sat down, covering his eyes with his hands. He was badly in need of rest himself, but his mind was full of the mother in the sick-room overhead.

Madam Omatsu, was she resting?

No, she still kept her watch, but she was very weak, and they feared she would break down if they could not prevail on her to rest.

Jack went slowly up the stairs, tapped softly on the shoji, and then entered the sick-room.

Taro lay on the heavy English bed, with its white coverlets and curtains, his face upturned.

"You must rest," Jack whispered to the woman with the wan face and wasted form, kneeling by the bedside.

She shook her head, resisting.

"I beg you to," pleaded Jack, and, though she could not understand him, she knew what he was saying, and still resisted.

"Come," he said, gently, and put his hands upon her shoulders. "See, he sleeps now. It is well, and you will be too weak and faint to minister to him when he awakes, otherwise."

But she protested that her health was excellent; that she would not leave her son. He stooped down, and attempted to raise her gently to her feet, but she would not permit him.

He saw the tired droop of the eyes.

"She will fall asleep soon," he said to himself, and so sat down beside her, putting his arm about her and pillowing her head on his shoulder. She did not restrain him. She looked gratefully into the frank, inviting eyes. She sighed, her head wavered and dropped. The room was very still and silent. Gradually the woman fell asleep, and as she slept she sighed from ineffable weariness.

Jack looked towards the silent figure on the bed. The grayness of the approaching night gave the face an expression that was sinister in the extreme. He shuddered and averted his face. The little form in his arms grew heavier.

"She will rest better lying down," he thought, and carried her into the adjoining room and laid her softly down. Then he took the lighted andon, and, carrying it into the sick-room, set it in a corner near the bed, and drew down the shutters. After this, he went

back to the bed, and stood for a minute looking down on the sleeping man, an expression of infinite sadness on his face. Taro stirred, the hand lying outside the coverlet contracted, then closed spasmodically; the expression of the face became terrifying. He moaned. It seemed to Jack as if the sleeping man was haunted by a terrible nightmare which robbed him of the rest that should have found him.

And it was with Taro as Jack had thought. He was in the midst of a fever dream—a nightmare. He thought his little sister, Snowflake, knelt by his bedside and soothed and ministered to his wants. He felt rested and at peace at last; but, alas! just as he was slipping into happy oblivion a dark form loomed up beside his sister, bent over, and clutched at her. She struggled wildly at first, then weakly; finally her struggles ceased, and she lay very still and white. The man lifted her up and carried her away. After a time he came

back, and now Taro felt his breath on his own face. He was bending over him. In a dim haze he saw the face, and recognized it as that of his friend, Jack Bigelow! He tried to reach out and grasp him, to strike and kill him, but he was at the mercy of some invisible power which benumbed him and held him down. His limbs refused to move, he was unable to lift so much as a finger, stir an eyelash, and all the time the man's breath was on his face, stealing into his nostrils and suffocating him.

Jack noted the gasping of his friend with alarm, and stooped over for the purpose of removing the pillow to give him relief. But at the touch of his hand, as he attempted to raise the head on the pillow, the life blood started vividly, madly, through the man on the bed, and suddenly he had sprung into wild life. Jack saw the terrible gleam of two delirious eyes, and stood magnetized. With lightning fury the

raving man had thrown aside the bedclothes, sprung from the bed, and thrown himself on the other with such force that the two came to the ground together, the madman on top.

"I have you now! — traitor! betrayer!" he said, as his hands felt Jack's warm throat.

Jack had been taken so by surprise that he was dazed in the first moment, and in the next realized that he was powerless to defend himself. He was in the grasp of one temporarily insane, one whose lithe, physical strength he already knew well. It would be useless to fight against that strength. His salvation lay in being passive and feigning unconsciousness; but could he do this with those terrible fingers closing around his throat, throttling the life out of him? Now they pressed hard, now relaxed, now caressed his neck and throat, rubbed it, pinched only to press again. He was playing with him! Jack did not stir. He had closed his

eyes, and was praying for strength to meet unflinchingly whatever fate held for him.

"Where have you put her?" came the fierce whisper, close to his ear. "Where did you carry her to? Hah! you are silent. Have I silenced you like this and this? You are cold; you cannot breathe now, nor smile nor laugh at her. No, not while I have my hand here to press so and so. Once you were my friend, and I loved you. But now—so you killed her! Now I will kill you like this and this and this!"

Jack was becoming weaker and weaker. The white-shrouded figure sitting on him leaned forward, staring dreadfully, but his victim saw nothing, heard nothing. Suddenly it seemed as if another had sprung upon him and was beating his life out. He dimly heard a woman's cries, and, intermingled, a terrible laughter. Then life and consciousness seemed to depart, and he knew no more.

When he regained consciousness he found himself on a bed. A woman was leaning over him, bathing his head, smoothing and caressing it—a woman with an angelic face, so like Yuki's when she had nursed him during a brief illness that in his weakness he fainted at the mere dream of her sweet presence. But it was not Yuki; it was the mother. She had been awakened by the talking and cries in the sick-room, and, rushing to the door, had looked in on the terrible scene. Japanese women have little or no fear of physical disaster for themselves. She raised a fearful cry to arouse the household, then flung herself on the two men, and with her puny strength sought to divide them. At first her son laughed and resisted her, but when her white face flashed before him his grip grew weak, and he staggered back, dazed by the rush of returning reason. He, too, had taken her for the ghost of his lost sister!

The alarmed household had flocked into the room. Gently they prevailed on him to return once more to the bed, as weak as a child now.

Jack was not seriously hurt. In his shattered, nervous condition, however, the shock had temporarily unhinged him, and for several days he lay in bed, waited on and attended by the gentle Omatsu, who went like a sweet, soothing spirit back and forth between the two rooms, who called him "son," and was to him as if she were indeed his mother, till she could not approach him but he kissed her hands and blessed her from his heart.

XV

THE VOW

THE happy sadness of the brown autumn had faded in a yellow gleam of light. December had entered the land with a little drift of frost and snow which had surprised the country, for December is not usually a cold month in Japan. Its advent shook the little housewives into action and life. New mats of rice straw were being laid, and every nook and corner dusted with fresh bamboo brooms and dusters, for the Japanese begin to prepare a month in advance for the New Year season, and all the country seems to wake into active life and present a holiday appearance.

But the old palace, where dwelt the

Burton family, kept its garment of perpetual gloom, and stood out in mocking contrast to the neighboring houses. No window was thrown open, no door turned in to air the place and give it the sunshine of the coming New Year.

Thick as the dust that had gathered about its unkept rooms, the shadow of death pervaded the place. Vast shadows, mysterious and oppressive, crept in, enshrouding it with their ghostly presence. From afar off the drone of a curfew bell was heard, its slow, mournful cadence seeming to drift into a dirge. Outside the early winds of winter were wailing a requiem, and all the spirits of the air floated about and beat against the sombre palace.

At dusk consciousness returned to the dying man, and weakly, though intelligently, he looked about him, and even smiled faintly at the wailing and moaning that crept upward from the rooms below, where the few old retainers of the household, who had been in the ser-

vice of the family long before Taro had been born, and had stayed by them after their fortunes had fallen, were huddled together and loudly lamenting the approaching death of the son of the house.

Before a tiny shrine in a corner of the room was the prostrate form of the mother. Her lips were dumb, but her speaking eyes wailed out her prayer to all the gods for mercy. And at the bedside, his face in his hands, knelt Jack Bigelow. Perhaps he, too, was praying to the one and only God of his people.

"Burton," he said, as the sick man stirred, "you have something to say to me?"

He bent over and wiped the dews that lay thick as a frost on lips and brow.

"My sister—" Taro began with painful slowness.

"My wife—" whispered the other, his voice breaking, and then, as Taro

seemed unable to proceed, he put his mouth close down to his ear.

"Burton, our grief is a common one. I swear by everything I hold sacred and holy that I will never cease in my efforts to find my wife! Nothing that strength or money can do shall be spared. I will take no rest till she is found. Before God, I will right this wrong I have unconsciously done you and yours—and mine!"

Taro's eyes, wide and bright, fixed Jack's steadfastly. His long, thin hand stirred and quivered, and attempted to raise itself. Without a word Jack took it in his own. He had understood that mute effort to mean belief and confidence in him. And, kneeling there in the melancholy dusk, he held Taro's hand between his own until it was stiff and cold.

Whither had the soul of the Eurasian drifted? Out and along the interminable and winding journey to the Meido of his maternal ancestors, or to give

an account of itself to the great Man-God-three-in-one-Creator of his father?

The mother crept from the shrine with stealing step, her white face like a mask of death, her small, frail hands outstretched, like those of one gone blind.

A consciousness of her eerie approach thrilled Jack Bigelow. He dropped Taro's hand and turned towards her, standing before and hiding the sight of the dead from her. In the dim shadows of the deepening twilight she looked as frail and ethereal as a wraith, for she had clothed herself in all the vestal garments of the dead.

With somewhat of the heroism of her feudal ancestors Omatsu had prepared herself to face and undertake that perilous journey into the unknown with her son. In the pitiful tangled reasoning that had wrestled in the bosom of this Japanese woman, always there had disturbed the beauty of such a sacrifice the doubt as to

whether the gods would indeed receive her with this son of hers who had dedicated his soul to an alien and strange God. But she had prepared herself to risk the consequences. And now she stood there swaying and tottering in all her ghastly attire, while opposite to her stood the tall, fair-haired foreigner with the pitying gray eyes of her own dead lord.

She essayed to speak, but her voice was barely above a parched whisper.

"Anata?" (Thou). It was a gentle word, spoken as a question, as though she would ask him, "Condescend to speak your honorable desire with me?"

"Mother!" he only said—"dear mother!"

At Taro's funeral Jack Bigelow made the acquaintance of his wife's family. He had not imagined it possible for any one to have so many relatives. They came from all parts of the country, distant and close cousins

and uncles and aunts, and even an old grandfather and grandmother, the former very decrepit and quite blind. And they all lined up in order, and wept real or artificial tears and muttered prayers for the soul of the dead boy.

A few of them were rich and important men of high rank in Japan; some of them were suave and courteous, coming merely for form's sake and for the honor of the family; most of them were of the type of the decayed gentility of Japan—poor but proud, dignified but humble in their dignity.

They all regarded Jack with the same grave, stoical gaze peculiar to the better-class Japanese, betraying in no way by their expression surprise or resentment at his presence among them. As a matter of fact, none of the family were aware of the relation in which he stood to them, and so had occasion for no real animus against him, regarding him merely as a friend of Taro's. But in his supersensitive

condition Jack imagined that they looked upon him as an intruder, perhaps as one who had brought distress and havoc upon their household.

When, however, after the funeral the little mob of friends and relatives had gradually dispersed till there was none left besides himself and Omatsu, the intense loneliness and silence of the big house grated upon his nerves, so that he would have welcomed the wailing of the servants, which had now been buried in the grave.

Omatsu, too, who had borne herself with heroic fortitude and bravery all through the day, now that the reaction had come was shivering and trembling, and, when he approached her with a pitying exclamation, she went to him straightway and cried in his arms like a little, tired child. He comforted her with broken words, though his own tears were falling on her little, bowed head. And he tried to tell her, in terribly bad pidgin Japanese — some-

thing Yuki had taught him—how it would be his care to protect and guard her in the future just as if she were indeed his mother; that he was not worthy, but he would try to fill the place of the beautiful boy who was sleeping his last sleep. And he told of the promise he had given to Taro, how his life would be devoted to but one end and purpose, to find his wife. Would she accompany him?

She entreated him to take her with him. But in the end, after all, she could not accompany him. Her health, which had never been robust, gave way to her grief, and Jack took her back to her parents, for it was necessary that he should spare no time from his search, and, moreover, she was too delicate to travel. Before leaving her he saw to it that she and her parents should have every comfort possible.

The old palace, grim, gray, and haggard in the winter landscape, was

now completely deserted. The townspeople looked askance at it, as at a haunted house, knowing somewhat of the tragedy that hid within its closed portals.

Jack was the last to leave the place. Omatsu had begged him to see to the closing up, and the paying-off of all the old servants. When he had finally come out he was shocked at the curious crowd of neighbors who had gathered about the gates and were whispering and gossiping about him and waiting for him. But they were quite respectful and silent as he passed them. He was an object of curiosity, this tall foreigner who had married among them, and they watched him with round, wondering eyes, following him all the way to the station, a little, pygmy procession, very much as children follow a circus. Once or twice he half turned as though to tell them to leave him, but stopped himself in time, remembering how strange he must really seem to them.

At the station he bowed to them gravely, and his bow was solemnly and politely returned by those in front. And it was in this strangely pathetic though grotesque manner that the tall, fair-haired barbarian left the town.

Less than a year before he had been a light-hearted, joyous boy. He was now a man, with a burden on his soul and a sacred task to perform. Moreover, there was an awful abyss in his life that must be bridged. Never again would life have for him the same rosy bow of promise, not until he had found that other part of his soul—his Sun-goddess.

XVI

A PILGRIM OF LOVE

JACK BIGELOW went up to Yokohama, where the Tokyo detectives thought they had a clew to the girl's whereabouts. A new and very beautiful geisha had appeared among the dancing-girls, and as no one seemed to know anything about her history it was thought that she might be the missing Yuki. But she had disappeared only the day before his arrival there.

Jack spent a month in the big metropolis, shadowing the tea-gardens, and watching, with the assistance of men he had hired, every geisha house and garden; but . though many girls apparently answering to the description

of Yuki were brought before him, none of them proved to be the missing girl, and the disgust the young man experienced at their total unlikeness to his wife was only equalled by his bitter disappointment.

A telegram from police headquarters brought him back to Tokyo. Here he was told that the detectives had traced the missing girl to Nagasaki, a seaport on the western coast of Kiushu. This was the city where Yuki's father had first lived in Japan. He had been the son of a rich silk merchant, and had come to Japan in order to extend his knowledge of the silk trade and expand his father's business. But Stephen Burton had become infatuated with the country, had married a Japanese wife, assimilated the ways of her people, and in time had even become a naturalized citizen. He never returned alive to his native England, though strange, cold, red-bearded men had taken his body from the wife, and had crossed the seas with it.

Old Sir Stephen Burton had never forgiven what he considered the *mésalliance* of his son, and hence Taro and Yuki had never seen or known any of their father's people, and he himself had died while they were yet children.

Some feeling of sentiment might have brought Yuki to this place. Moreover, there were many public tea-houses there, where she could quickly find employment. The police were positive in their statements that they were not mistaken in the identity of the girl they claimed to be Yuki.

Travelling by slow and tedious trains, with no sleeping accommodations and but few of the modern luxuries that are necessities on American trains; travelling by kurumma, with the flying heels of his runners scattering the dust of the highway in his eyes, when the landscape before, behind, and around him seemed a maze of dazzling blue; travelling on foot, when he was too

restless to do otherwise than tramp, he was weary and ill when he finally reached Nagasaki. Here an amazing horde of nakodas pestered him with their offerings of matrimonial happiness. He had no heart for them. They stifled him with memories that were better sleeping.

The tea-house to which he had been directed was owned and run by an elderly geisha, who, in her day, had been noted for her own beauty and cleverness. She was all affectation and grace now. She met Jack with exaggerated expressions of welcome, and in a sweet, sibilant voice pressed upon him the comforts and entertainments of her "poor place."

He did not pause to exchange compliments with her.

Was there not in her house a girl, very beautiful and very young, who sang and danced?

Madam Pine-leaf (that was her name) allowed her face to betray surprised

amusement at the question. Why, her place was famous for the beauty of her maidens, and every one of them danced and sang more bewitchingly than the fairies themselves. But she only said, very humbly:

"My maidens are all unworthily fair, and all of them indulge in the honorable dance and song. It is part of the accomplishment of every geisha."

"Yes, but you could not mistake this girl. She is distinct from all others. She—her eyes are blue. She is only half Japanese!"

"Ah-h!—a half-caste." Madam Pine-leaf's lips formed in a *moue*. She was very polite, however. She pretended to consult her mind. Then she begged that he would remain, at all events, and see for himself all her girls.

Impatiently he waited, a terrible nervousness taking possession of him at the mere possibility that Yuki might be near him. But though he scanned with almost seeming rudeness the faces

of the inmates of the place, none of them was like unto her whom he sought.

When he paid his hostess, who, recognizing in him a generous patron, had been careful to stay close by him the entire evening, his face betrayed his exceeding disappointment.

The woman glanced at the big fee in her hand, and a feeling of pity and gratitude called up all her native prevarication.

Now that she had spent the whole evening turning the matter over in her mind, she recalled the fact that only a few days before a girl answering exactly to his description of his wife had worked for her for a short period, but unfortunately she had left her and gone to Osaka.

Madam Pine-leaf's face was guileless, her words convincing. There was gentle compassion in her eyes, which added to the comfort of her words.

Jack wrung her slim hands gratefully till they ached.

Osaka? How far away was that? Did Madam Pine-leaf believe he had time to get there before she would leave? What was the exact address?

Yes, she believed he would be in time, and she drew out a dainty tablet and wrote an address upon it, and with deep and graceful obeisances she prayed that the gods would accompany and guide him.

He reached Osaka at night, when its many strange canals and narrow rivers were reflecting the lights of the city, like glittering spear-heads, on their dark, shining surface. The hotel was miles from the station, but the streets were deserted, and there was no traffic to hinder the flying feet of his runner. At night the city seemed strangely romantic and peaceful, a spot that would have attracted one of Yuki's temperament. But daylight revealed it as it was — a bustling commercial centre, where everybody seemed

hurrying as though bent on accomplishing some important mission.

Jack stayed but a few days in Osaka. She was not there. The proprietor of the Osaka gardens, hearing his story, humbly apologized for the fact that while such a girl had honored for a short season his unworthy gardens, she had left him now some days ago. Whither had she gone? To Kyoto.

And in Kyoto, the most fascinating and beautiful city in all Japan, he was sent from one tea-house to another, each proprietor acknowledging that one answering to the description had been in his employ, but declaring that she had left only a short time previous. She was only a visiting geisha, who moved from place to place.

Finally he traced her back to Tokyo, the place whence he had started on his weary pilgrimage. She was the chief geisha, so he was told, of the Sanzaeyemon gardens. With his brain swimming, his lips almost refusing him

speech, he went straightway to this place. The proprietor received him with magnificent humility, and, listening to his disjointed questions, answered that all was well. She was even then within his honorably miserable tea-house. For the privilege of seeing her he would be obliged to make an honorably insignificant charge, and, if he (the august barbarian) desired to take her away with him, a further fee must be forthcoming.

Waiving these questions aside, by putting down so much coin that the little proprietor's eyes matched its glisten, he followed him up the stairway to the private quarters of the more important geishas. Into one of the rooms he was unceremoniously ushered.

A girl who sat on a mat put forward her two hands, and her bowed head on top of them. Jack watched her with bated breath. He could not see her face, and the room was badly lighted. But when he could bear no longer her perpetual bowing and had lifted her,

with hands that shook, to her feet, he saw her face. It was that of a stranger!

A slight illness now hindered the progress of his search, but he would not allow himself the rest he needed; and still ill, haggard, and a shadow of his former self, the young man once more drifted to the metropolitan police station.

They had exhausted all their clews, but they were kind-hearted little men, these Japanese policemen. The chief of police invented a story that would have done credit to one of Japan's poets.

Yuki was somewhere in the vicinity of Matsushima Bay, on the northeastern coast of Japan, near the city of Sendai, where the waters flow into the Pacific. This was a spot favored by unhappy lovers, and the chief of police had positive evidence that a girl answering to her description had been seen wandering daily in that part of the country. He even produced a telegraph blank,

with an indecipherable message in Japanese characters written on it, purporting to give this information. His advice to the young man was to go to this honorable place and stay there for some time. The country was large thereabouts. He might not find her at once, but soon or late surely she would turn up there.

Jack was impressed with his glib recital, and then, moreover, he remembered that Yuki had told him much about this place, which they had planned to visit together some day. He started straightway for it, buoyed up with a hope he had not known in months.

And the chief of police snapped his fingers and bobbed his head and clinked the big fee he had received.

"These foreign devils are naïve," he said to an assistant.

The cringing assistant agreed. "They believe any august lie," he replied.

His superior frowned. "It was for his good, after all," he returned, tartly.

In the city of Sendai Jack put up at a small Japanese hostelry, and from there each day he would start out and wander down to the beach of the wonderful bay. It was all as Yuki had pictured it, with her vivid, passionate imagery. There were the countless rocks of all sizes and forms scattered in it, with strange, shapely pine-trees growing up from them, and the one bare rock called "Hadakajima," or "Naked Island," and all the beautiful romances, impossible and dreamy as the fairy tales of a classic Oriental poet, that she had woven about and around this place, came back to his mind now, haunting him like a beautiful dream, until the memory of her, and the influence of the beauty of the place, seemed to cast a mystic spell about him.

For, oh! the scenes that enwrapped the bay! The slopes and hillocks and

the great mountains beyond were garbed in vestal white, pure and glistening. The snowflakes had tipped the branches of the pine, and there they hung, like glistening pearl-drops, sometimes dropping with little bounds on the rocks, there to freeze or melt into the bay.

And some vague fancy, baffling in its hopelessness, nevertheless, clung to him that possibly she might have come hither to this peaceful spot, far from the scenes where they had loved and suffered so deeply, for, with unerring insight, Jack knew that she had loved him. Bit by bit he traced backward in his mind every proof she had given him of this, and now, when the sorrow of her loss seemed more than he could bear, the knowledge of this upheld and cheered him always.

But the beauty of Matsushima could give him no peace of mind or soul, for he was alone! The stillness and silence of the very atmosphere, the tall pine-trees, bending gracefully in the

swaying, swinging breezes, seemed to mock him with their calm content. The bay was enchanted—yes, but haunted too—haunted by the imagination of the little feet that had perhaps wandered along its shore.

In a little village only a short distance from the beach, inhabited by a few simple, honest fisher-folk, Jack tried to ascertain whether they had seen aught of her he sought. But they babbled fairy stories back at him. There had been many, many witch-maids who had haunted the shores of Matsushima; many young girls, who had lost their minds through unfortunate love affairs, had wandered thither. They were the ghosts of these unfortunate lovers, who had sought in death the bliss of love denied them in life, which now haunted the shore of the bay.

That the strange, fair man who had lost his bride would meet the same untimely though poetic fate the simple people never doubted.

And so, like one who has lost his soul, he wandered hither and thither throughout the islands of Japan in search of it.

Sunshine had been the dominant element in Jack Bigelow's character, and in a less degree impulsiveness and generosity. No one had ever given him credit for intensity of feeling or greatness of purpose. But sometimes tribulation will bring out such qualities, which have lain hidden beneath an apparently superficial exterior.

A deep, abiding love for his summer bride had sprung into eternal life in his heart. She was never absent from his mind. There were moments when for a time he would forget his immeasurable loss, and would drift into memory, and in fancy re-live with her that dream summer. She had become the soul of him. She would remain in his heart until it ceased to beat.

XVII

YUKI'S WANDERINGS

HAD Jack followed Yuki on the night she went out of his house and life, he would have known that she was not to be found in all Japan. She had hurried from his and Taro's presence with but one object—to take herself forever from the sight of the brother whom she had loved but who had repulsed her, whom she had dishonored in trying to assist. She took the road for Tokyo, and, head downward, sobbing like a little child who has lost its way in the dark, stumbled blindly along until she had come within its limits.

She had no idea whither she was going now, what she would do; her mind

could only contain her grief. But as she wandered aimlessly about, weeping silently, an address slipped itself into her consciousness—the address written on the card handed her by the American theatrical man months before, when he had followed her from the tea-house. She had studied the card curiously at the time, and now, though the name had escaped her—she had really never been able to make it out — her mind still held the address.

She turned in the direction in which she knew the American's house lay, and at length found it, wearied both by the anguish of her mind and by her long walk. Yes, the American gentleman was in, said the garrulous Japanese servant who answered her timid summons. He had returned from lands far south less than a week ago, and now in two more days he would be off again. Did she want to meet him? Perhaps he slept.

Yuki said she would speak with him

but a minute, and the servant vanished. Almost immediately the manager appeared before her, frowning heavily. But at sight of her his face brightened wonderfully.

"Why, if it ain't the girl I heard sing at the tea-garden!" he cried. "Come right inside."

And he eagerly drew her, unresisting, within.

Two days later, on board the *Yokohama Maru*, Yuki left her native Japan.

As the ship weighed anchor, she closed her eyes and faintly clung to the guard-rail. All about her she could hear the passengers talking and laughing, a few were cheering and waving flags and handkerchiefs to friends on shore. And long after the wharf was only a dim, shadowy outline she still clung there to the rail, her hands cold and tense.

Some one put an arm about her, and she started as though she had been struck.

"You are not ill already, you poor little thing?" said a woman's clear, pleasing voice.

Yuki regarded her piteously. She dimly recognized in her the wife of her employer, and she struggled to regain her scattered wits, but vainly. She was only able to look up into the sympathetic face of the other with eyes which could not conceal the turbulent tragedy of her soul.

"Why, you are shivering all over, and are as cold as— Jimmy, come over here," she turned and called peremptorily to her husband, who hastened forward, throwing his cigar overboard.

"Look here; she's sick already. Better send one of those ayah women, or whatever you call 'em, over, and have her put to bed right away."

They undressed her, submissive as a little child, and put her into the berth of a little stateroom, which seemed to Yuki, who had never in her life before been on board a vessel of any sort, save

the tiny craft about the rivers at her home, like a tiny cage or vault, wherein she, exhausted and weary, had been put to die.

She lay there with the surging bustle of the ship's noises overhead and the tremulous growl of the waters beneath the ship droning in her ears like the melancholy ringing of a dying curfew-bell at twilight.

The ayah reported to the manager's wife, an ex-comic-opera prima donna, that she was resting and sleeping; but when that impetuous, big-hearted woman peeped in on her, she found Yuki's eyes wide open. She whirled into the small stateroom, almost filling it with her large person, and sat down beside the poor little weary girl and looked at her with friendly and approving eyes.

"You are like a pretty picture on a fan," she said; "the prettiest Japanese girl I've seen. I think we'll be fine friends, don't you?"

Yuki could only assent with a weary

little nod of her head. She closed her eyes.

"You are not so dreadfully sick, are you?" said the American. "I thought maybe we could have a nice little gossip together. You see, my husband's the boss of this whole outfit that we've got along with us, and I don't know that there's one of the whole lot I've ever cared to associate with before. You're different. Now, ain't I good to speak out just what's on my mind, eh?"

"I *ought* to thang you," said Yuki, feebly, "but I am too weary to be perlite."

"Then you shall be left alone, you child, you," said the other; then she kissed Yuki lightly, and went out of the door.

But after she had gone Yuki's passivity left her. She sat up quivering, and then with nervous quickness she began to dress herself. She could not open the door of the stateroom. She

was unused to strange doors that required the pushing of springs and bolts. She had lived in a land where bolts and locks were almost unknown, where a shoji fell apart at a touch of a hand. Now she pushed hard against the door, but, as she had not turned the handle, it refused to move. A terror possessed her that they had locked her in this tiny, awful cell, to which penetrated no light save that which filtered through a small porthole against which the waters beat and beat.

She flung herself desperately against the door, battering it with her tiny hands; she felt herself growing dizzy and blind as the ship rocked and swayed beneath her feet. She tried to pace the tiny length of the stateroom, her sense of terrible loneliness and homesickness deepening with every moment. The moving of the ship horrified her, and the knowledge that it was taking her farther and farther from her home across the immense bottomless sea filled

her with a terror akin to nothing she had ever known in her life before.

In the sickening, wearying dazzle of the few days previous to their sailing, the girl's mind had held but one thought —to go far away from the scenes of her pain; now perhaps the reaction had come, and her terror at the step she had taken appalled her. Memory, which had been thrust out of sight by the ever-present nagging pain that had blinded her to all else, now asserted its power, merciless and invincible. She pressed her hands to her head, as though to blot out forever from her mind the pitiless ghosts that haunted her.

Like the wraiths that come and vanish in a nightmare, the events of her life came to her one by one—the happy childhood with her brother, their passionate devotion to each other, her grief at his departure for America, the months of struggle that had followed, sacrifices made for him, her attempts to make a living sufficient for his maintenance in

America, and then—her marriage! After that, memory held no other thought but the immeasurable craving and longing that was almost madness for the voice, the touch, the sight of the man she had loved and left.

It was three days before her illness ended. Then, having begged the consent of the woman who attended her, she crept up the companion-way and out on deck, where the passengers were disporting and enjoying themselves.

She had looked forward to the time when she would regain sufficient strength to leave her prison-cell, for such she regarded her stateroom. In the strange medley of ideas which had curiously woven themselves into a maze in her mind, she had imagined that once in the open on deck she would see once more the shores of her home, Fuji-yama's lofty peak smiling against its celestial background, and hanging like a mirage in mid-air.

But there was no sight visible to

her, as, with her hand shading her eyes, she looked out before her, save a vast, cold, pitiless waste of surging waters, jumping up to meet the sky, which smiled or glowered with its moods.

In the months that followed, Yuki met with nothing but kindness from the American theatrical manager and his wife. With them she went to China, India, the Philippines, and finally to Australia. From all these different points the American theatrical scout drew together a motley troupe of jugglers, fancy dancers, wizards, fencers, and performers of one sort and another, with which he hoped to make a larger fortune in America. He had combined business with this long pleasure trip, for he was on his bridal tour at the time.

By some remarkable intuition peculiar sometimes to the gayest and most frivolous hearted of women of the world, the wife of the theatrical manager had

gained some insight into the cause of the pitiful sensitiveness and shrinking shyness of the queer little Japanese girl with the blue eyes, to whom she had taken an extravagant fancy.

She had taken Yuki under her personal charge, and sheltered and shielded the girl from the overbold scrutiny of those with whom they daily came in contact. It was many months, however, before she learned her history. In fact, it was only a few days before their expected departure for America, the great country in the west, which seemed to Yuki as far distant as the stars above her.

As the time for their departure, which had been delayed already much longer than the manager had anticipated, drew nearer, Yuki grew more depressed and restless, so that to the exaggerated fancy of the American woman she seemed to be fading away and entering into what she emphatically called "the last stages of consumption."

She cornered the girl relentlessly, and finally wrung from her the whole pitiful, tragic story of her life. How homesick and weary she had been ever since she had left Japan, how her heart seemed to faint whenever she thought of that final interview with her brother, and of the immeasurable longing for the man she loved, and whom she had married "for jus' liddle bid while."

All the big, romantic heart of the American woman went out to her as she took her into her arms and mingled her own honest tears with Yuki's.

"You sha'n't go to America," she said, drying her eyes with a tiny piece of lace which served as a handkerchief. "You are going right back to Japan, bag and baggage of you. I'm going with you, to see you get there O.K."

"Bud—" began Yuki, weakly.

"Never mind, now. I know he expects to sail in a week. I don't. I'm boss! See!"

XVIII

THE SEASON OF THE CHERRY BLOSSOM

IN summer the fields of Japan are alive with color — burning flat lowlands shimmering with the dazzling gleam of the natane and azalea blossoms. In autumn the leaves, as well as the blossoms, have caught all the tints of heaven and earth, and in winter the gods are said to be resting after their riotous ramblings during the warm months. But in the springtime they awake, and in their lavish renewed youth bless hill and dale and meadow and forest with an abandon unlike any other time of year. It is the season of the cherry blossom, of the mating of the birds, the babbling

of the brooks, and the chattering and unfolding anew of all the beauties of nature.

It was two years from the day when Jack and Yuki had married each other in the spring-time. And Jack was back in Tokyo. Recalled thither by a telegram from the police headquarters, he was preparing to depart for America, where the police claimed they had positive evidence that Yuki had gone. He was staying at an American hotel in the city proper, and his heart on this day sickened and yearned for the little house only a few miles away that he longed and yet dreaded to see again.

Now that he contemplated leaving Japan, the dread possibility that Yuki might still be in the country and that he would be placing the distance of thousands and thousands of miles of land and water between them, depressed and weighed on his mind, despite the really plausible proof the police board had that she had gone to America

with a theatrical company—that of the very man he himself had witnessed coaxing her to go with him.

The afternoon previous to the day set for sailing, his melancholy and morbidness grew in intensity. With no fixed purpose in view he started out from his hotel, tramped half-way across Tokyo, then hailed a jinrikisha and gave the runner orders to take him to the little house that had formerly been his home, and which he had struggled against visiting ever since his return to Tokyo.

As in a dream the interminable stretch of rice-fields, blue mountains, and valleys and hamlets, stretching away into misty outlines, flashed by him, and he noted only half absently how the heels of his runner were all worn hard just as if they had dried in the sun. Yuki once had called his attention to this.

"The honorable soles are the same," she had said. "It is the perpetual

running. The gods have mercifully protected the feet from pain."

The landscape about him, familiar as the face of a mother, gave him no pain now. He was conscious only of a sense of ineffable rest and peace, as a traveller who has wandered long feels when nearing home. And soon the runner had stopped with a jerk, and was doubling over and waiting for his pay.

Should he humbly wait for his excellency to condescend to return to the city?

"Just for a little while," Jack told him absently. And he went through the little garden gate and up the pebbled adobe path, now arched on either side by two rows of cherry-blossom trees, that met at the top and made a bower under which to walk.

When he had pushed the door backward and stepped inside he paused irresolute, his heart paining him with its rapid beating. Coming from out

the blaze of the out-door light into the shadowed room, his vision dazzled him. But gradually the objects inside grew upon his consciousness, and a rosy pain, an ecstasy that stung him with its sweetness, shot upward like a dawn through all his being.

He scarcely dared breathe, so potent was the influence of the place upon him. He feared to stir, lest the spell, ghostly and entrancing as the influence of a magic hand, might vanish into mistland, for with all the immeasurable pain that rushed to his heart in a flame was mingled a tentative, exquisite pleasure —a survival of the old joy he had once known.

And there came back to his mind whisperings of the old mysterious romances she had been wont to ramble into. What was that tale of the spirit which haunted and was felt but never seen? Was there not behind it all some mysterious possibility of such a spirit? For the very furnishings of the room,

the mats, the vases, the old broken-down hammock, and his big tobacco-bon, each and all of them suddenly assumed a personality—the personality of one he loved.

Stepping on tip-toe, he crossed the room and stooped to touch the little drum, the sticks of which were snapped in twain. And then he suddenly remembered how she had broken them because he had complained one day that her drum disturbed him. He had liked the koto and the samisen; the drum she had beaten on when she mocked him. Now the sight of it beat against his brain and heart.

He could not bear the sight of those little broken sticks. He tried to cover them with his handkerchief, as if they were the evidence of a crime.

"The place is haunted!" he said, and scarce knew his own hollow voice, which the echoes of the silent room mocked back at him.

"I shall go mad," he said, and again

the echoes repeated, "Mad! mad! mad!"

Then he covered his eyes, and sat in the silence, motionless and still.

From afar off there came to him the melancholy sweetness of the bells of a neighboring temple. They caused his hearing exquisite pain. What memories were recalled by them! But now every toll of the bells, slow and muffled, seemed to speak of baffled hope and despair. There was no balm in their sweet monotone. Would they never cease? Why were they so loud? They had not been so formerly. Now they filled all the land with their ringing. What were they tolling for, and, ah, why had the ghostly visitants of his house caught up the tone, and softly, sweetly, with piercing cadence, chanted back and echoed the sighing of the bells?

The house was full of music, inexpressibly dear and familiar. He started

to his feet, trembling like one afflicted with ague. And gradually words, in a fairy language that he had learned to love, began to form themselves into the melody of a voice.

Slowly, painfully, like one led by unseen, subtle, persuasive hands, he went forward, and up and up the spiral stairs till he had reached her chamber, and there he stood, like one who has come far and can go no farther.

One other presence besides himself was within. This he knew, and still could not comprehend. He could see her plainly, just as she had been in life—her little, shining head, her dear, small hands, the long, blue, misty eyes, and the small mouth with the little pathetic droop that had come to it in the last few days they had been together. She stood with her hands raised, dreamily loitering before a mirror, putting cherry blossoms in her hair on either side of her head. But at the prolonged silence that ensued she turn-

ed slowly about, and then she saw the man standing silently in the doorway.

She was not a girl to scream or faint, but she went gray with fear, and stood perfectly still there in the middle of the room. Then gradually her eyes travelled upward to the man's face, and there they remained transfixed.

For a long while they faced each other thus, both with hearts that seemed not to beat. Then the man made a movement towards her, a passionate, wild movement, and she had dropped the flowers from her hands, and had gone to meet him. The next moment he was crushing her to him. When he released her but a moment, it was to hold her again and yet again, as though he feared to find her gone, and his arms empty once more, as they had been for so long. He could only breathe her name—"Yuki! Yuki! My wife! My wife!"

Neither tried to explain. There was time enough for that. They were ab-

sorbed alone in the fact that they were together at last.

Some one noisily entered the house and whirled up the stairs. It was the American girl. She gazed in upon them with eyes and mouth agape in amazement.

"Well, I never!" she ejaculated, and went out and down the steps, sobbing aloud.

"Such a romance! Such a nice, big fellow, too! And, oh, dear me, I've lost her sure enough now forever! Bother men, anyhow!" and she jumped into Jack's jinrikisha and bade the man take her on the instant to Tokyo.

Meanwhile the lovers had wandered out into the open air. He was holding both her hands in his, and his eyes were straying hungrily over her face; her eyes bewitched him; her lips thrilled him.

The thousand petals of cherry blossoms were falling about them, and the



"THE THOUSAND PETALS OF CHERRY BLOSSOMS WERE FALLING ABOUT THEM"

birds had all flown to their garden and were twittering and bursting their little throats with melody. A fugitive wind came up from the bay and tossed the little scattering curls about her ears and temples. A strand of her hair swept across his hand. He stooped and kissed it reverently, and she laughed and thrilled under the touch of his lips.

"I love you with all my soul," he said. "Do not laugh at me now."

She said, "Dear my lord, I will never laugh more ad you. I laugh only for the joy ad being with you."

"I will take you to my home," he said.

"I will follow you to the end of the world and beyond," said she.

"And we will come back here again, love. We will take up the broken threads of our lives and piece them together."

"They shall never again be broken," she said. But he must needs spoil

her divine faith. "Till death do us part," he added.

"No, no. We will have the faith of our simple peasant folk. We are wedded for ever an' ever."

"Yes, forever," he repeated

THE END

